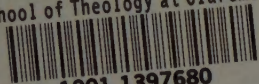


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THE ADMIRING GUEST
AND OTHER SERMONS

S. A. TIPPLE



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THE ADMIRING GUEST,

And Other Sermons.

BY

S. A. TIPPLE,

Norwood.



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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
THE ADMIRING GUEST - - - -	I
WITNESSING TO THE TRUTH - - -	15
AN EASTER MESSAGE - - - -	30
JESUS, SABBATH-BREAKING AND WRATHFUL -	44
JESUS, AND THE THREE BIRTHS - -	60
THE KINGDOM OF GOD - - - -	76
THE SON OF MAN, ASHAMED OF, AND COMING IN GLORY - - - - -	92
THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR - - - -	108
ON PROCRASTINATION - - - -	122
BEAUTY LOST AND FOUND - - - -	136
A WHIT-SUNDAY MEDITATION - - -	151
HOSPITAL SUNDAY - - - -	166
IS IT WORTH WHILE LIVING? - - -	182 <i>Life</i>
MERCY - - - - -	197
THOSE IN THE FRONT, AND THOSE BEHIND THE SCENES - - - - -	212

THE ADMIRING GUEST.

‘And when one of them that sat at meat with Him heard these things, he saith unto Him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.’—LUKE xiv. 15.

WHAT, I wonder, did he mean exactly, who said that? What was the idea in his mind, the inner spirit of his word? To be sure of this, we should need to know the kind of man he was, and something about his views concerning the kingdom. One can imagine so many and such different things which the exclamation might have signified. It might have signified nothing more than a wistful dream of sensual enjoyment, a dream of participation in social festivities expected to accompany the ushering in of the Messianic reign, when Israel would celebrate her long-hoped-for exaltation with sumptuous banquetings, and in the general gladness men would be gathering daily to eat and drink together. Or it might have come from the lips of some weary soul, weary of the

tumult and trouble that filled his days, of life's perpetual strain and stress, of the grinding care, the ever-recurring pain of disappointment and perplexity—and sighing for rest from it all; to whom the kingdom meant a new order under which the labouring and heavy-laden would enjoy sweet rest, and every rough path be smoothed, and there would be peace at length for them who were far off, and for them who were nigh. The speaker was thinking, perhaps, of a time, free from present clouds and plaguing storms, of sitting down to meals from day to day in blessed quiet, with no more poisoning fret and worry.

Or, again, he may have been one who, always proposing to do more and better, had always been hindered somehow, to his lamentation, by unpropitious and hostile surroundings; whose cherished aspirations were constantly thwarted by these, so that he could not be the thing that he would, and who was craving, like many, that change of environment which should put an end to his mortifying failures, having which granted him, he would surely cease to fail thus—those other kindlier and happier circumstances in which he should be able to follow his vision of the best, and attain as he desired.

Men have often fancied that they did but need to be otherwise placed, with another sky over them and another scene around them, in order to become presently other than they are—the creatures of nobler carriage and finer behaviour that they would fain be, and in their existing place with its disadvantages and drawbacks cannot manage to be. They have pictured to themselves the excellence they might achieve, the purer lives they would lead, were but their lot somewhat rearranged for them, were but a more congenial and favourable sphere accorded them; reckoning vainly on evolving spiritual results from other than spiritual sources, not from the action of the will over circumstances, but from the action of circumstances on it; and instead of making the most of the materials and opportunities supplied them, have wasted breath in wishing that they were differently situated.

And it may have been out of some such feeling that Christ's fellow-guest at the Pharisee's dinner-table exclaimed as he did, thinking what it would do for him, whose surroundings were against him, whose aspirations were baffled by his circumstances, if once all things were set right in the land, occasions of temptation, obstructions to virtuous living, diminished or re-

moved, and the general atmosphere cleansed by the establishment of the Messiah's reign; thinking how blessed it would be, how blessedly liberative of the imprisoned good in him were it but his to have daily encompassing him, the social tranquillity and harmony and purity of the kingdom of God! And who, after all, has not felt and bewailed at times the terrible difficulty of being what he would be, the difficulty of faithfulness to his moral ideal while exposed to certain inevitable contacts and intercourses, and has not in the words perhaps of the Hebrew Psalmist: 'Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!' sighed for deliverance from this, for contacts and intercourses less inimical and more helpful? Great often, indeed, is both the necessary hindrance, and the helpful ministry of place; the things around us are not without their hampering or aiding influence; and for the full perfecting of the individual, some perfecting of the multitude is required. Only with it, is his full perfecting to be attained. Nevertheless, as one has truly said: 'While the elements of happiness may not be at our command, since they depend more or less on the action of many wills and on the character of many hearts and lives, and by a Divine law the

holiest must ever bear, to some staining or oppression of themselves, the sins and sorrows of the rest,—yet over the blessedness of our own spirit circumstances need have no control; we know the beatitudes of Christian life, and these are so far from being a product of circumstance that only against the contradiction and in conquest of circumstance do they reach their height.’

But, to return to the text. The exclamation of him who sat at meat with Jesus was caused, we are told, by certain words of the latter to which he had been listening. His sudden cry, ‘Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God,’ was drawn from him by what he had just heard from the lips of Jesus, and here, perhaps, some clue might be found to the mind of the man. It was a dinner-party—apparently a large dinner-party—at the house of a Pharisee who had invited Jesus, in the hope, probably, of hearing Him talk; and the curiosity or interest of the Pharisee and his friends had been gratified; He had been talking freely during the meal, His latest theme of discourse, unselfishness—unselfishness depicted under two aspects, in two different forms of it; the one suggested to him by the festive occasion, and the other by the behaviour of those present.

He had noticed their eagerness and effort to secure the chief seats, each mindful not of others, but of himself alone, each intent on getting before others, on pushing his way to the front, heedless of what became of his neighbours, all struggling for the pre-eminence; and He began to describe, in contrast, the true behaviour, showing how they should consider and be ready to yield to one another, and instead of striving to thrust themselves forward, and snatch at and seize for themselves, should rather hold back, and give way to others, content to take the lowest place rather than be thus aggressive, self-asserting and self-seeking. That is how you should behave, He said: rebuking the selfishness that sought and fought for its own advancement, regardless of those around it, and commending the unselfishness which is willing to stand aside for the sake of others, willing to resign generously, and generously efface itself; which would sooner remain lowest than oust or obstruct others to gain the highest.

Then, — looking round on the assembled guests, who were mainly well-to-do friends of the host, capable of returning his hospitality, of entertaining him presently as richly as he was now entertaining them, from whom he might

expect to receive another day like good things, —Jesus proceeded to say: ‘When you make a dinner or supper, you should call, rather than your well-to-do acquaintances, the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, who cannot recompense you in the same kind. In your social life your chief desire and aim should be to minister, to flow with service for the needy, with comfort for the heavy-laden, with help for the weak, displaying the unselfishness which cares less for gathering upon itself than for dispensing, which loves to pour itself out upon others, whose central, deepest aspiration and impulse is to serve.’ Whereupon as He finished, the silence was broken by one of the listeners with the ejaculation: ‘Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.’

Well now, the ejaculation might have come, we could imagine, from one in the company—some poor relation, say, of the rich Pharisee who happened to be invited that day with the rest; who, assuming that the utterance of the Prophet of the kingdom foreshadowed what would be when the kingdom was fulfilled, just felt with an inward glow of anticipation how delightful it would be to be living then, amongst people who were always ready to renounce themselves and their own interest in favour of

others, always devising and providing for the happiness of their poorer neighbours. Why, it would be a paradise for him and such as he, to have those who now flocked to and filled the front places leaving them empty for any to take who chose, any of his class who were now hopelessly excluded from them; to have those who possessed abundance ever caring and expending for him, bidding him to feasts who now was never or rarely bidden!

‘Ah!’ we could imagine him to have thought, ‘if it should indeed be thus when the kingdom comes, as the utterance of its Prophet would seem to foreshadow, then, the Lord hasten its advent. Blessed will it be for those who shall live to eat bread therein. Fine days for us will those days of the Messiah be!’ Forgetting, you see, that in the indulgence of such thought he was exemplifying the very selfishness which Jesus had condemned; and allowing the picture drawn of beautiful unselfishness to stir in his breast for answer nothing but a yearning dream of pleasure and advantage for himself; the Master’s lovely and lofty teaching productive in him of nothing but reflections directly opposed in their spirit to the spirit He had been inculcating. And so it is sometimes that good words falling here and there are the

means of provoking or suggesting only what is not good ; that noble sentiments expressed excite in some who hear only ignoble mental motions ; as sweet gentleness shown may serve but to inflame and enrage, or the purest, holiest objects, encountering a certain class of mind, awaken foul ideas and base feelings. For, how we shall be moved, or led to think and throb within by what is seen or said, depends on what we are.

But the speaker at the dinner-table is hardly to be thus understood. Judging from the parable in which Jesus replied to him, *He* evidently did not understand him thus. So let us try again. Here, in Christ's words, had been represented His ideal of conduct, the morality which He would fain have cultivated and practised ; listening to which the man had thought, perhaps, 'A splendid morality, certainly, that may possibly be realized at some distant day, in the future kingdom whose coming the Prophet anticipates. In the future kingdom men may be found embodying it in daily action, but as yet, of course, it is altogether beyond us ; the counsel given is a counsel of perfection which none could dream of seeing carried out now or attempt to follow.'

And his exclamation may have meant, 'Ah,

it will be a happy, glorious time when such a height is reached, when bread is eaten, when lives are lived in the kingdom of God.' Confessing that, he lightly turned from the height, as inaccessible for the present, as too high to aim at. Now, Christ's words might well have called forth something like this. We are not unfamiliar, are we? with the temper of mind which readily acknowledges the beauty of an ideal depicted, and only wishes it were pursued after, and could be, but straightway puts it aside with an easy sigh as unpursuable, as something entirely out of range; which says, when it is exhibited and urged, 'Oh yes, that is all very fine, very grand, but in existing circumstances—or situated as we are—it is quite impracticable. *Quite impracticable!* Right? Yes, it may be right enough, but for me to endeavour to live up to it is simply impossible; the endeavour would involve me in all sorts of disastrous consequences, would ruin my worldly prospects.' Many there are who, recognising the beauty and claim of an ideal, are yet unwilling to accept and cherish it as their ideal, shrinking from any effort to order their lives by it. 'It would be useless,' they say; 'it would not do at all;' and they smile, perhaps, with a wondering, half-pitying smile, at any beside

them who may be trying, dubbing them 'visionary,' 'chimerical,' 'too good for the world.' Yet were it not for such whom they thus dub, there would be little advance, little moral progress of humanity; for advance is promoted by the few here and there who are moved to essay the impossible, whom the seemingly unattainable draws and attracts, and who are resolute to plod and strive after it, though they should be unable to get near it, and must needs remain ever afar off.

What the world wants for its benediction, is not the men who reject an ideal because it is so high, but the men who, because it is so high, determine to make it their aim, and would rather aim thereat till they die, and miss with tears of disappointment, than aim at aught lower and hit the mark. Alas for the many who cry with occasional thrills of feeling, 'Blessed would it be to eat bread in the kingdom of God,' and never dream for a moment of seeking to realize for themselves something of the blessedness. And it is as though Jesus had understood it to be thus with the exclaiming guest when He answers him with the parable of the offered feast to which the bidden excused themselves from coming, meeting the invitation with pleadings of inability, of

being compelled by entangling circumstances to stay away.

One good thing, however, was certainly indicated in the man, namely, a sincere admiration of the ideal presented, a real sense and impression of its beauty. 'Oh, blessed, blessed!' he cried, 'to be doing as you have described in your exhortation; and as they may do hereafter in the kingdom!' It was something, anyhow, that the pictured lofty morality charmed him; that admiration for the excellent was kindled within him; for when one can and does admire truly a noble principle which yet he fails to follow, or a noble model which yet, instead of striving to copy, he is content to leave uncopied, it is a sign and token of something in him better than he is, of a germ of noble things waiting to be developed, of a certain Divine element in the midst of all his carnal or devilish elements. Here is a ground of hope concerning him, a hint of his capacity for salvation. No creature is utterly lost, however depraved and sunken, who can at least admire the nobler life he is so far from living; who in moments by the way feels the charm of it and some throb of longing after it. And have you never found, to your surprise, perhaps, what admiration for the noble there can be in mean breasts;

how an elevated sentiment or a magnanimous deed will beget at once some answering pulsation in those whose doings are wholly unworthy and low ; how there is that in the most vicious to which an exemplification of splendid virtue appeals ?

And this is the enfolding within them of the germinal Son of God. It testifies that they are more than they are ; that whatever children of perdition they may be, they are redeemable ; it shows them capable of glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life. Yet, withal, nothing is sadder ; I do not think there is any sadder sight than to see one admiring often a great ideal, and owning the dignity, the blessedness, to which it invites, while still denying it in conduct and declining to reach after it, since we see him rejecting thus the dignity and blessedness for which he is framed and designed, and that might be his, renouncing his birthright, his inheritance, refusing, as Jesus said in His parable, the feast to which he is bidden. In rejecting thus, moreover, he runs the risk of destroying for himself the chance. For an ideal beheld and admired without being cherished and pursued, beheld and admired and then faithlessly turned from, means resistance and stifling of the striving good in us—

a resistance and stifling which cannot be repeated save at the cost of progressive self-deadening and deterioration, and a gradual decay of the admiring faculty.

The moral admiration which we are capable of feeling is the heavenly material within us for the construction of moral character. To let it rise and rise unproductively, to have it excited again and again and ever subsiding, barren of result, is little by little to waste and spoil the material, until at length none may be left for the construction of the character that might have been. At length the ideal, once beheld and admired, vanishes altogether from our field of view, ceases to flash upon us, ceases to visit us; and, as Jesus warned in His parable, the decree goes forth that by those for whom it was prepared, and who had been bidden, the supper of God shall never be tasted. Beware of admiring a standard of excellence without any effort to follow it; beware of allowing the heart to cry and cry again, 'Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God,' without any effort in the direction of the kingdom. That way lies the destruction, by degrees, of existing possibilities of attainment; that way lies the black doom of present capacity forfeited and lost.

WITNESSING TO THE TRUTH.

‘ Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice.’—JOHN xviii. 37.

IT was thus, according to the writer of the fourth Gospel, that Jesus, toward the close of His life, summed Himself up, describing in one brief sentence the meaning of all that He had said and done during the years of His ministry, what His ruling purpose had been, and what His performance also.

This was the account which He is represented to have given of Himself while waiting for the end which He knew to be nigh—this His dying estimate of what He was and had accomplished.

A fine thing indeed to have been able to declare in the face of death so succinctly and so complacently why He had lived and laboured

—the aim of His whole activity and the work wrought !

‘ Yes, I am a King ! ’ was His reply to Pilate’s half-sneering question ; for the friendless, forsaken Galilean enthusiast, the poor helpless prisoner, had been speaking of His kingdom, and the Roman governor before whom He stood to receive judgment had asked Him, ‘ Art thou a king then ? ’ His recorded answer to which was the Hebrew form of assent equivalent to ‘ Yes, you have just hit it ; I am a King. ’

In speaking of His kingdom He had explained, however, that it was not ‘ from hence ’ —that it was not of the same nature as earthly kingdoms, was not founded like them on outward might or authority, did not belong like them to the sphere of the political or secular. It is not ‘ from hence,’ He admitted, although it is *here*.

And there it was, even while He stood fettered and forlorn in Pilate’s judgment hall, for was He not reigning royally the while over all the scorn and malice, over all the hostility and hate that beset Him ; spiritually succoured, spiritually nourished and promoted by all the hard, harsh circumstances to which He was subjected, by the sufferings which were con-

tributing to perfect Him? And more, had He not captured and gained command of certain human souls whose love was still His, if for the present their faith was shaken, who if for the present wavering away from Him, would be unable to escape Him, whom He held fast in their secret depths notwithstanding their temporary recoil, and was destined to sway and control, to the domination, through them, of millions besides? A kingdom he had—here and now—though not from hence.

But it is not on these grounds that we find Him—in the text, at least—claiming to be a King, but on the ground *that He had come to bear witness of the truth.* ‘To this end was I born,’ He says, ‘and for this cause have I been in the world, that I should bear witness to the truth.’

Such, then, was his idea of what the Almighty required of Him and intended Him for—His idea of what it was to be a man, of the great ‘wherefore,’ of individual being.

Down in the seclusion of Nazareth during those quiet years with His father and mother in their village home, before the country knew aught of Him, He had revolved the question doubtless, brooding over it often and deeply, ‘For what am I here? What is the real end

of existence? What the object which I have been created to fulfil?’

The question has been revolved in different moods by thousands—languidly, fretfully, impatiently, earnestly. Many have speculated about it idly or anxiously; have sought to discover for themselves a satisfactory answer to it; have complained that they could not,—that they could not discern clearly the meaning of life.

But in the course of His seclusion at Nazareth Jesus had settled it for Himself. He was born *to bear witness to the truth*, and His words to Pilate implied that this was what He had been doing ever since His appearance in public; which followed naturally from the depth of His conviction, for to have reached His vivid vision, His profound persuasion of the end of existence, would be to act accordingly, and could not but result in devotion to that end.

Men are not devoted like Him, because they have not seen and felt like Him. Many assume that the pursuit of pleasure is the end, or the making of money, or they do not know exactly what it is; they have no distinct opinion on the subject, and lounge and loaf through their days without any central constraining purpose.

Could but the end which Jesus saw and felt

be borne in upon them as it was upon Him, they would repeat His consecration; it would be the necessity with them that it was with Him.

And why, we are ready to ask at times—why is one awakened to a transforming sense and perception, and another not? What a chance it seems often! One man happens to be brought in contact with some inspiring person or some rousing, quickening circumstance such as another never encounters.

But this bearing witness to the truth of which Christ speaks—what is it? He does not say, ‘I am sent to minister or communicate the truth, to proclaim and teach what is true,’ but ‘to *bear witness to the truth.*’ The expression is peculiar, and suggests something outside and beyond Him, something that was not His own or in Him, but external to Him, lying around and above; as when we bear witness to what has occurred yonder, to what has been said or done by somebody, to his worth or character, or to the features, the resources, the manners and customs, of a country we have visited, to its condition and prospects according to our impressions.

And here you have intimated His idea of the truth. It was not for Him the mere circle of

doctrine which He taught, just that which lay within His field of view, to the vision of which he had attained, just that and no more which He perceived and was inculcating; but something far transcending this, to which, with this as a mere sample or specimen, He only witnessed.

The truth—it was not in His possession, was not grasped by His thought or contained in His dream; it was a great vast from which He had drawn, a few rays from which had reached and penetrated Him; an unfathomed ocean with a wave or two from whence He had been sprinkled. Hence the silence with which He met the Roman governor's inquiry, 'What is truth?' 'Ah, why did He not answer?' you may have murmured to yourself. Oh, would that He had! But He could not, and was too full of understanding, too humbly wise and too wisely humble, to pretend to.

Pilate meant, I suppose, with a sneer, 'The truth! Ah, who can tell us what that is?' And for all his sneer, which he might have spared, he was right, for no one can. You can show me such and such *truths* which you have learnt, whether in morals, in religion, or in science; but *the truth* is infinitely more than all your truths, and remains, at our loftiest height of

discernment, undiscerned—at our furthest point of discovery, undiscovered.

It is not in me, or in you, or in any, or in all of us combined, but, while lending us, in response to our wistful cry, fragmentary portions or broken reflections of it, ever spreads out and stretches away beyond. We do but obtain from it at the most ; it is never obtained. We are but broken in upon by it now and again, with here a little and there a little dash or spray, like an island, billow struck and foam-flecked by the boundless sea that surges round it.

And thus Jesus seems to have thought of it—as a surrounding immensity out of which some truths had come to Him, and to which, with these truths of His, He was bearing witness—witnessing to the truth from whence He had received according to His measure, with His faithful devotion to, and expression of, these.

He had not *the truth* to proclaim ; He was simply testifying to it in proclaiming the truths which He had received from it. It was more than they, as the sun is more than the beams he sends us, as the fountain is more than the stream that flows from it. ‘My truths,’ Christ seems to have thought, ‘are not *the truth*, but the truth’s distributions to Me, for Me to cherish

and make known on its behalf. They are what has fallen upon Me and passed into Me from the great environing, overshadowing universe of truth, on whose behalf, in whose service, I cherish and make them known.' He had no idea, therefore, of anything like finality in vision and conception—had no idea that nothing more was to be learnt by man on moral and religious subjects than He had learnt and taught them, but looked for further and other truths to be doled to them from the fulness of the truth as time went on.

'Another shall succeed Me,' He said, 'when I am gone, who shall lead you toward heights beyond. Not My works only, but greater works than Mine shall ye do hereafter.'

But now let us endeavour to understand a little more definitely concerning this witness-bearing of His. What was it? In plain words, it was His earnest listening for, and His faithful reporting of, Divine realities; this is just what He appears to me to have claimed, that He had been intent on seeking, and on setting forth as He found, Divine realities—realities about God and soul, about man and duty, about good and evil, salvation and damnation.

He had been from His youth unable to rest in the Jewish traditions in which He was brought

up. The conventional theology and morality offered for His acceptance had not satisfied Him. He hungered and thirsted for the real, wanted to find, and, finding, to stand by and display that. That had been His supreme aim from the beginning. He had earnestly listened for it amidst the voices of tradition and the loud insistence of the conventional, and, as it made itself heard in His heart, above the din of these, had faithfully reported it. 'Let me get hold of realities,' He said to Himself, 'and bear witness to them with lip and life.'

It is an attainment, to be asking thus for the real; for, 'what is customary or fashionable, what is popular or orthodox, what will be pleasant or most likely to pay'—these are the chief questions with many. They are more concerned about the lucrative, the enjoyable, the generally adopted, or 'the regular thing, you know,' than about realities; content if they do but make sure of the former, and not alive enough to inquire at all after the latter, drowsily embracing what prevails around them, what they find established or commonly chosen and revered.

Drowsily engrossed with mere seemings and shadows, it never occurs to them to ask whether this that obtains in their circle, this line which

they are following, this groove in which they are running, is according to truth. They have no solicitude with regard to the actual rightness of what is usual, no solicitude to ascertain for themselves the actual soundness of accepted standards and maxims.

But the soul of Jesus had early awakened to cry out within Him for the *real*, and could not rest until it was discerned. It might possibly be found in the traditional and conventional, in the moral and religious ideas of the people about Him, in the doctrine of the scribes and elders who sat enthroned in Moses' seat. He did not predetermine that it would not; but He must e'en examine, to see and know for Himself, for nothing would satisfy Him unless He felt it real. He must, anyhow, touch and grasp realities, and as in His quiet, earnest search He touched and grasped some, He had royally borne witness to them, not with His lips alone, but in his life also.

What He saw as Divinely true, He bravely uttered and bravely lived.

Mercy rather than sacrifice; aspiration rather than ceremonial observance; purity of heart rather than outward washings and lustrations; filial trust and obedience rather than pride in Abrahamic descent; love of God, in self-for-

getting love for man, as the fulfilment of all law.

These were some of the realities revealed to Him—Divine realities—and He had testified to them in what He was, as well as in what He taught, in His daily conformity to them, and exemplification of them; which was what He meant probably when He said, ‘*I am the truth*,’ meaning that He Himself was an expression and manifestation of the truths He inculcated.

And now shall we not say with Him that this is the end of existence, that for this we have been born and are in the world—to seek after and witness to the real: the real in all our several relations and departments, the reality with which we are to correspond, by which we are to guide and govern ourselves, in harmony with which we are to shape our course and work our work; the reality, for example, of duty for me in such and such situations; the reality of the laws to be observed in executing, that my execution may be sure or worthy; the right thing to be or do which meditation may show me, or which I may perceive clearly in my highest moods; the true way of performing what I have to perform, in contrast to the false, the defective, or the slovenly way; the

true way, irrespective of whether it will be the pleasantest, the most profitable, or the most approved by others,—the reality of our best thought, our finest ideal; to wait upon and behave in fidelity to that, let the difficulty or the danger be what it may. The reality of our attained conviction,—to hearken to and answer to that at any cost.

May we not say that we are here to witness in our lives for the true, for the true ideal, namely, of master or servant or parent, if we occupy such positions, or of any other function exercised by us, and for what is true to our serious contemplation or sincere inquiry, for what may be borne in upon us as a solemn or beautiful verity?

This, I take it, is our sacred business here—to be witnessing in our particular work, whether it be the work of a parson, a housemaid, or an artist, for the truth as regards that work and the mode of prosecuting it, for the ideal way in which it should be done; and to be witnessing for whatever we see and feel as a Divine reality, to be acting, aiming, and choosing in accordance with that.

‘But I can hardly confess,’ says one, perhaps, ‘to any such seeing and feeling.’ Can you not? Well, much which was real to Jesus may not be

real to you. His invisible Father, for instance, may be no reality to you, and you cannot bear witness, therefore, with the filial trust and peace with which he testified of Him.

But are there no Divine realities for *you*? Honesty, purity, magnanimity, unselfishness, are they not such? Then, let these at least be expressed by you. Fulfil the end of existence by witnessing for these in your life. To report in the life aught that is Divinely real to us, be it much or little, is not this the calling to which we are called? 'And he who does it is,' as Christ declared, 'a king.'

'Because I have done it,' He said, 'I am a King.' Yes, indeed; for it was not done in His case—nor is it ever done in any case—without some conquest or overcoming. There are so many things generally to hinder and oppose, so many things that have to be striven against and triumphed over—native indolence, or lower impulses and inclinations, worldly considerations, the fettering influences of surrounding custom and opinion, the apprehension of possible rough, or unpleasant consequences.

To do it, often requires great courage and strength, capacity for enduring the cross, if not the shame, for rising superior to anxiety

about our material well-being, or to care about what people may think and say.

Again and again men have had an ideal and have shrunk from surrendering to it; have seen the better way, the nobler course, and have been unable to follow it. 'We only wish we could,' they have sighed; 'but it would cost too much, would involve certain relinquishings or sacrifices, which we are not capable of making.

'Here we are entangled by circumstances and interests to any defiance of which we are unequal, bound up with a system of things from which it would be terribly hard to extricate ourselves, to separate ourselves from which would mean more of loss or secular disadvantage for us than we are able to accept. What can we do, alas! but go on as we are, in spite of the better and the nobler that we see?'

Yes, they are not royal enough in soul to bear the battle. It is not in them to be kings.

A man in some field of labour has an ideal which he is afraid to act on. How in the world should he manage to live if he did? Or it is more lucrative, brings him more popularity, to conform his work to something lower, and dread of narrower means or fewer smiles chains him down, vanquishes instead of being vanquished by him. He weakly consents, in weak

subjection to it, to work below his best vision ; to be a traitor instead of a witness to the truth.

To witness to it, to every Divine reality that is beheld by us, we must conquer and overcome, and therein are kings — kings, too, because such fidelity wins and inherits regally, whatever it may lose, whatever straitnesses or privations it may entail ; sweet liberty and enlargement are given to it, and progress from more to more of fine perception. It dwells in a princely palace of its own, and gradually men come to appreciate and pay it homage, or else, while having nothing to the end, it yet possesses all things.

In proportion as any are bravely true to the light in their soul, listening for the real, and, as it is heard, faithfully reporting it in the life, they may stand, and say with Christ, even in desertion and defeat, ‘ We are kings !’

AN EASTER MESSAGE.

‘If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.’—COL. iii. 1.

IF ye be risen with Him, or, more literally, were raised with Him, that is, at the time when He rose, raised with Him in His resurrection—and the writer’s ‘if’ must not be thought to imply the least uncertainty on the point; it simply introduces a premiss upon which a conclusion is to be based, simply lays down a fact as the ground for the appeal which follows. There was not the slightest doubt in his mind, or in the minds of his readers; on the contrary, it was the full and firm assurance of both that they were raised with the risen Jesus.

But to the Apostle, His resurrection was more, evidently, than mere return to life after death—mere resurrection from the grave; it comprehended for him revival and exaltation, His ascension after death to a new and higher

state of being—to a region beyond the earthly and the visible. That He, rose whom men had crucified and laid in the grave, meant for him that He rose into a new and grander existence, that, reanimated, He went up from hence to live elsewhere more abundantly, more royally, even at the right hand of God, where He was then seated.

Now, to St. Paul and his readers Jesus was not only the ideal man—a Divine model for imitation, to whom it should be their study and endeavour to conform themselves—but also the prophetically representative man, typifying and foreshadowing in Himself, in His course and progress, in His development and attainment, the destiny of all—of all, at any rate, who were touched with His Spirit, and took Him for their spiritual Lord and Guide.

Their destiny was prefigured in Him; in Him they saw what was determined for them; His fortune was an earnest of their fortune. Whatever, then, He had become, they were said to have become; whithersoever He had gone, they were said to have gone thither, because His becoming and His going were the certain promise and pledge of theirs.

Had He died to sin, so had they in Him, though not yet actually dead to it. Had He

ascended to heaven, so had they in Him, though not yet actually there.

Thus in the words, 'Ye are risen with Christ,' this was the fact declared, that His rising typified and foreshadowed their rising, was the anticipation of their triumph over death, proclaimed them to be no mere children of mortality, but heirs of a Diviner life beyond the grave; having another and superior world to look forward to as their portion when they had done with the present; and the fact furnishes the ground of the appeal to them to seek the things that are above, where Christ was sitting at the right hand of God.

1— 'The things that are above.' It is an image based on our moral nature, local elevation being the instinctive symbol of spiritual aspiration and refinement. They were to seek above what they had once sought—above the level of ordinary pagan desire and aim; higher things than money, place, selfish gratification, or any material and secular good, and distinctively those things for which Christ had been distinguished, and which prevailed at their best and brightest, which ruled, and were everything, in that upper realm to which He had passed —truth, righteousness, purity, and noble love. —

And they were expected to find an inspira-

tion and incitement to the pursuit and cultivation of such things in the thought that they had risen with Christ, in the thought and sense of their great inheritance, of the great and blessed prospect secured to them.

Thus they were urged, you observe, to seek things above, not in order that they might come thereby to participate in the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, but because they were sharers in it, because it was the distinction appointed for and settled on them.

The Apostle's injunction is not that they should strive to be worthy and do worthily in order that they might come to have and enjoy, but that they should strive because of what they already had and were enjoying, which is just a reversal of the exhortation frequently given. Again and again we may hear men exhorted to goodness by the consideration of something which is to accrue from it, of some advantage or benediction which it will ensure. It is pressed upon them less for its own sake than for what shall be gained through it—for the peace, the happiness, the future safety or glory to which it shall conduct them; this is made to seem the chief value, the chief beauty of it. It is inculcated as a means rather than as itself an end; is represented as the straight

gate by which alone entrance can be effected into a garden of satisfactions, rather than as itself the satisfying garden.

And here is the abating, detracting element in connection with much of our virtue, the alloy and lurking taint in it, that it is not practised or acquired for itself, but with a view to something else; that it is not rested in as a home, but is cherished and clung to as a passport or ticket of admission. Our care for it and devotion to it is more or less stained with an *arrière pensée*, and it has been designated, not improperly or unjustly, mere other-worldliness, as being but worldly solicitude and eagerness turned in another direction.

But here, in the text, a different spirit breathes: 'Seek things above,' says Paul, 'because of what has been granted you, not that you may *have* something granted to you.' There is nothing more to be procured; the utmost is yours in the ascension of Christ, for you are risen with Him; therefore give yourselves to excel. Virtue was the end—the end for which they were dignified with immortality. They were summoned to reach after it on the ground of their investiture. The inducement presented is the claim of high position, the responsibility of rich possession. It was as

though the writer had said, 'Remember your rank and standing, and act in accordance with it; labour to be worthy of it.'

And there *is* always that which we have and are with which we might prick and stimulate ourselves if we would, which should suffice to move us on to well-doing—our relations with others, our place in society or in the family, with the influence belonging to it for good or evil, our means and resources, and the applications of which they are capable, the authority or measure of command which we have over some who look up to us and are ready to be swayed by our example, or to take their tone from us. Here are considerations enough to inspire us.

Moreover, *I* am something, whoever I am; that should kindle me to aim at becoming more and better than I am. Whoever I am, I need not seek for the wherewith to kindle me outside myself, in the region of remote consequences—in some future salvation or reward. The wherewith may be found in myself, in my own moral constitution, in the existence of the fixed scale in my mind which ranks selfishness and sensuality as low, and reverence, justice, love, as high. There is that in me, amidst all my downward tendencies, which marks me as made and meant to ascend, which cries for me

to be good—it is the demand of my highest nature.

I have that within me at my worst, the offered incentive of a lurking sense—a lurking Divine element. In it I am risen though lying prone and cleaving to the dust. Let me make it my incentive to climb, starting from and sustained by the felt claim upon me of what I am; and to seek things above under the constraint of conscious position and possession is a freer, easier, happier task than to be seeking them with a view to some obtaining from them—to some reward which they shall bring us; the labour is sweeter, the movement more light and bounding.

This was the secret of the moral energy and enthusiasm which the New Testament Apostles excited in their converts, with their gospel of all sin washed away by the blood of Jesus, and of heaven open for all by His resurrection; of the old man crucified with Him, and the new-born man seated with Him on high; they endowed them with the self-respect of conscious position and possession, and set them pursuing virtue, not anxiously, that they might be saved, but serenely and flowingly, *because* they were saved; their reason, their impulse, not the need of escaping perdition or securing blessedness,

but the need of becoming and behaving in harmony with what they were—the obligation to be purified as they were pure, and noble as they were ennobled.

And is it not just through some elevation of them to begin with, that men, who till then had grovelled, have learnt to elevate themselves—stirred and animated to become by what they had become? All that they want often to lead them to do better than they are doing is the engendering within them of some self-respect in which they are deficient, or which they have lost; they are without any standing from whence to start, are kept down in being so low down. They have nothing for the sake of which, in the pride or the joy of which, to try and be something.

Let them be made to feel that, however fallen or degraded, they *are* something after all; that a bit of worth lingers in them—that there are those to whom they are of value—that they have the trust, the love of others, and they would be found presently essaying to improve.

But St. Paul's appeal to the Colossians to seek things above was based specifically upon the fact of their immortality, upon the fact that another world beside this was in store

for them—another and a grander ; that theirs was not a little life ‘rounded by a sleep,’ but a life destined to extend and augment beyond the grave.

‘Ye are risen with Christ.’ His resurrection is the forecast and pre-intimation of yours ; the narrow space between birth and death is but a fragment of your inheritance, but the porch of your existence. The temple has yet to be entered. You are on your way to a further and superior state of being ; the present mundane scene is not your boundary. You are appointed to transcend it, to overflow from hence into eternity ; therefore seek things above. Spurn, therefore, the mean and the weak, and aspire and strive to conduct yourself nobly. And who can doubt—who will not admit that a persuasion of immortality is calculated to energize and stimulate to this, that it is helpful to brave and beautiful doing, tends to impart a spirit and a strength which is hardly to be realized in its absence.

Are there not times at least—times of depression and defeat, or times of feebleness and languor—when it would avail to reinforce and sustain ? when it would assist to save men from declining on lower levels, and to keep them on high by its exaltation of them as the

citizens of no mean city—as the possessors of a boundless horizon? The dignity and importance with which it clothes them, the element of grandeur which it adds to their being, cannot be otherwise than inspiring. It raises and sublimates the aspect of everything belonging to them—everything with which they have to do, all their tasks, duties, and experiences, and renders impossible the moral laxity or carelessness which is apt to result from the feeling that all is so small, so fleeting and ephemeral; while they must needs be supported by it in any cherishing of superior aims, in any effort to be and do their best.

I do not know, indeed, that the persuasion is necessary for the maintenance of virtue, or necessarily productive of virtue. Many may have it on whom it exerts little or no ennobling influence, and many, again, are found noble without it—men who are constrained and content to follow after righteousness, though to-morrow they may die.

Yet there is a moral value in the hope of immortality that would surely be missed were the hope to disappear from the world. As John Stuart Mill said, in one of his remarkable posthumous essays on religion: ‘Its beneficial effect is far from trifling; it makes life and

human nature a much greater thing to the feeling, and gives greater strength as well as greater solemnity to all the sentiments which are awakened in us, by our fellow-creatures, and by mankind at large. The benefit consists less in any presence of a specific hope than in the enlargement of the general scope of the feelings, the higher aspiration being no longer checked and kept down in the same degree as when no future existence is anticipated, by the sense of the insignificance of human life, or the disastrous reflection that it is not worth while.' This, of course, is no sufficient ground for indulging the hope. It may be only an illusion, for all its felt moral value.

In view, however, of what we are and have grown to be, in view of our instinct of worship, our higher spiritual qualities, our progressiveness, and the unveiled potentialities of being, our extinction at death seems altogether too low and poor and simple a solution of the mystery of humanity, and the assumption of it, as one has said, 'about the most colossal instance of baseless assumption that is known to the history of philosophy.'

Regarding, moreover, the strange rudimentary faculty we have acquired for the contemplation of the unseen and the apprehension of

the idea of the infinite and eternal—strange, because out of relation, out of proportion with our present sphere; and observing, at the same time, what physiology teaches—that it is ‘a common law for the same living creature to pass from a lower to a higher state of organization, and that in the lower state certain organs are formed for its use later on in the higher,’ I cannot but infer that this faculty of ours, incongruous with our condition, is the foreshadowing for us of a higher state of existence.

Looking at the soul element developed in us as the last crowning product of a long evolution, I cannot think—although we know of it only in conjunction with corporeal form—yet I cannot think, that it has been developed to perish presently with the perishing body, that that is to be the mocking, miserable end of it all.

I am constrained to count on its persistence, and must e’en cherish the faith which another Easter sings anew and symbolizes with the spring flowers—the faith that Christ is risen indeed, and we with Him, the faith held by a late great English poet, who in conversation is reported to have said, ‘It is this dwelling upon death that I despise, this idle and often cowardly, as well as ignorant, dwelling in fiction, in poetry,

in art, in literature. The shadow of death—call it what you will—atheism, or negation, or indifference—is upon us. But what fools they are who talk thus! Why, you know, my friend, you know with me that death is *life*; for myself I deny death as the end of everything. Never say of me that I am dead.’ And even so he left us singing—singing with his latest breath:

‘ At midnight in the silence of the sleep-time
 When you set your fancies free,
 Will they pass to where—by death, fools think, im-
 prisoned—
 Low he lies who once so loved you, whom you loved
 so?—pity me !

‘ No, at noonday, in the bustle of man’s work time,
 Greet the unseen with a cheer !
 Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be ;
 “ Strive and thrive ! ” cry “ Speed, ”—fight on, fare
 ever there as here !

But, since with many of you, nowadays, science may have induced a predisposition against or distrust of the hope of immortality, let me close with a sentence from the pen of a scientific writer found in a book called ‘ The Creed of Science ’:

‘ Is it possible that mind—the thing so splendid in its manifestations, with its vision of beauty, its depths of tender affection, its

Godlike apprehension of truth, its divine enthusiasm for the right—that this subtle and wonderful essence, so slowly gathered and distilled through countless ages, should be thus recklessly spilt and lost again out of the universe?

‘Is Nature so blind and stupid, as well as so foolishly wasteful of her garnered gains, as to throw away the grandest thing—the only really great thing she has reached? The thing, moreover, to attain which it seems that all her efforts have been bent? Is it thinkable that consciousness shall perish and eternal night and nothingness set in? We must conclude that there is a vice in the reasoning which leads to a conclusion so desperate and absurd.’

JESUS, SABBATH-BREAKING AND WRATHFUL.

‘And He entered again into the synagogue ; and there was a man there which had a withered hand.

‘And they watched Him, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath day ; that they might accuse Him.

‘And He saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth.

‘And He saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil ? to save life, or to kill ? But they held their peace.

‘And when He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, He saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out : and his hand was restored whole as the other.’—MARK iii. 1-5.

THIS story of the restoration of the palsied hand is told also by the first and the third Evangelists, though by each with some variation. In St. Matthew it is the Pharisees who propound a question to Jesus—the question ‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day ?’ to which He replies by asking them whether, if a sheep of theirs had fallen into a pit on the

Sabbath day, they would not lay hold of it and lift it out, and whether a man was not of much greater worth than a sheep; and then declares, without pausing for an answer, that it is lawful to do *good* on the Sabbath day.

In St. Luke the only difference is that He is represented as penetrating the unspoken thoughts of those who were watching Him with the hope of finding an accusation against Him, and seems moved to work the cure by His consciousness of their secret thoughts. But neither of the Evangelists breathes a word of His looking round with anger before working it. St. Mark alone mentions the emotion He displayed.

The ground on which, according to St. Matthew, Jesus defended His action in the present instance, St. Luke attributes to Him substantially on two other occasions of Sabbath healing, when He is made to say—now, in the case of the woman bowed together with infirmity—‘Doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall and lead him away to water?’ And, again,—in the case of the man afflicted with dropsy, ‘Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a well and will not straightway draw him up on the Sabbath day?’ And many, doubtless, were the

46 *Jesus, Sabbath-Breaking and Wrathful.*

occasions on which He took the same ground, or something like it, repeating an illustration of the kind, the substance of which would remain in the memory of His disciples, however confused their recollection might become of the precise details or of the particular incident that called it forth. Nothing, in fact, is more certain than the freedom with which He was wont to treat the observance of the Sabbath, in regard to which the stricter portion of the community were so extremely scrupulous; and the numerous controversies and conflicts in which this freedom involved Him.

Here, He was conspicuously unsound, and appears to have been constantly offending, constantly exciting severe animadversion. It was, apparently, one of His most obtrusive and exasperating heterodoxies, and gave rise to more murmurs against Him than almost anything besides in His behaviour. Not that He scorned or slighted the fourth commandment, and was intent on showing how little He cared for it; not that He claimed to do just as He listed on the seventh day, heedless of established custom, and of regulations which were held sacred by numbers around Him. His temper was too devout and reverential for that; but having learnt, unlike most others, to place the

moral above the merely ritual, to recognise the moral as pre-eminent over all, He felt compelled to follow the demands of morality, irrespective of any clashing with religious usages; felt compelled to pursue His benevolent work and to respond with ministry to the cry of human suffering or need, though it should be in contravention of them. He was content—nay, willing to conform to them when they could be conformed to without prejudice to what was due from Him to the needy or the suffering, without prejudice to the interests of men; but not when it would prevent or interfere with the discharge of His duty to them.

The interests of man must be His first and paramount consideration, and no religious usage, no ceremonial observance, however venerable or becoming, or lofty its sanction, must be allowed to stand in the way of what might be required for the promotion of these. Thus all His recorded arguments in vindication of His Sabbath healings are based, you will notice, upon the supremacy of man, and man's welfare.

Would they rescue a sheep from distress on the Sabbath? How much more a man, since he was of immeasurably greater value than a sheep! To have His disciples preserved from fainting with hunger, or enabled to continue un-

48 *Jesus, Sabbath-Breaking and Wrathful.*

hindered their commune on high things, was of greater importance than that the Sabbath law should be kept by abstaining from plucking the ears of corn. The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath; he, therefore, was its Lord, to regard it or not, as it conduced to his benefit. Was the keeping it of real benefit to him? Then let him keep it punctiliously; but if not, if he found no help in it; if, instead of helping, it proved in any way detrimental to him, he was at liberty, of course, to neglect it. He was the Lord, for whose use it had been instituted, and, unless it was fraught with some use for him, what reason existed for cherishing it?

And so, in the instance before us. 'Is it lawful on the Sabbath,' He asks, 'to do good or do harm, to save life or to kill?' The question, you see, which makes the alternative not, doing or refraining from doing, but, doing good or doing harm—implies that to refrain from ministering when you have the opportunity and ability is to be guilty of defrauding; that not to succour when you can, is equivalent to inflicting injury; that he who omits to save when he might is virtually a destroyer.

But the central idea is still, that since here was a *man* whose condition called for relief, he

must not be wronged and sinned against in being left unrelieved for the sake of any adherence to religious forms and ordinances, but must be relieved with whatever violation of them may be necessary; that attention to them must be sacrificed to attention to him; the service of man before all. This was the doctrine of Jesus; this the principle He offered for the rule and guidance of life; the principle for determining what, at any time, in any circumstances, ought to be done or avoided.

Some fifty years prior to His birth, a school was founded in Jerusalem by a rabbi of the name of Hillell in opposition to the school of one Shammai, and the story goes, as related, in fact, in the Talmud, that a certain Gentile expressed to Shammai his willingness to become a proselyte if only the latter were capable of teaching him the whole religious doctrine of the Jews while he could stand steadily on one leg; and that, having been angrily chased from the rabbinical presence, he went at once to Hillell, expecting to irritate him in the same way; but the latter, on hearing his demand, replied calmly: 'Good, my son! Now make ready and listen. *Do not to others what you would not have them do to you.* There is the substance of our law; the rest is only its application.'

50 *Jesus, Sabbath-Breaking and Wrathful.*

Well, Jesus, familiar with the utterance of the famous rabbi, and adopting it with cordial satisfaction, promulgated it Himself in the superior form of 'Do to others what you would have them do to you, for such is the law and the prophets.' He was able to communicate His system of divinity with no less brevity than Hillell, reducing, as he did, all duty and all piety to the single principle of devotion to the service of man. Love to God, indeed, but love to God in love to His creature man. That, with Him was the right, the good, the noble, which sought, and went to promote, any real succour or furtherance of *man*.

With Him the answer to the question, What shall I do or decide on in such and such conjunctures, or how shall I regulate and conduct myself daily? lay in the one word, 'Do and decide, regulate and conduct yourself, with a view to the best interests of man.'

His idea of holiness was *utility*. He would have said substantially with a modern prophet, 'In whatever way we aid the world, instead of hindering it, whether by our prayers and songs and sermons, and industries in the church, or by the painting of a picture, the writing of a book, the digging of a drain, the fighting of a battle, we therein exemplify holiness; and in whatever

way we hinder the world, are obstructive at all to its health or growth; in whatever way we hurt when we should be healing, discourage when we should encourage, or drag down when we should be raising—therein we are wicked. The first principles of sin and holiness reach back into all creeds and all churches, so far as they stand true to life, and no further, and the ultimate touchstone of holiness is the organic law by which the highest weal of the whole man can be secured in his relation to the whole world and all the men that are in it.'

Well, to Christ, it would have been unholy to conform to the sacred Sabbath law by leaving this person in his weakness whom He might strengthen, because it would have been the reverse of helpfulness. He must e'en break recklessly the law of religious ceremony, to keep devoutly the Diviner law of charity; and it is the helpfulest thing which is always the holiest.

But now, with regard to the anger displayed by Jesus on the present occasion, the anger to which He was roused by the attitude of those around Him. The mention of it, as I have before observed, is peculiar to St. Mark, one of whose distinctions it is that he brings out in his narrative more than the others the true, full humanity of Jesus—betrays with many a touch

not found in them the rich sensibility of His nature; the passion of which He was capable; the strong feeling He could show. Once and again does St. Mark report His manifest emotion when the others are silent about it. He alone relates how the Master sighed deeply in spirit when the Pharisees came demanding of Him a sign from heaven, unable to repress some bitterness of heart at their unbelieving temper; and how He was much displeased with His disciples, or, rather, moved with indignation toward them, when they rebuked the mothers for bringing their children to Him; and how, again, beholding the rich young man who sought to know the best method of obtaining eternal life—He fell in love with him. And it is St. Mark only who tells us of the anger with which He turned upon the watching Pharisees in the synagogue of Capernaum.

Now, the fact that it was remembered and preserved in the oral tradition concerning Him until the earliest Gospel was written, to be there noted down as one of the incidents of the story, indicates sufficiently that the anger must have been very noticeable—noticeable enough to leave a profound impression upon the minds of His Apostles. They must have been struck with the expression of it; must have seen that

in His look and tone and manner which they could not easily forget. And why have we no allusion to it in the two later Gospels? Were the others restrained by their jealousy for the character of the perfect One? were they afraid, in their desire to depict His faultless excellence, lest it should seem derogatory to Him—lest it should seem unworthy of Him to have flamed thus under the perverseness of His opponents?

If it were so, they need not have feared, for had He never known aught of the agitation of anger amidst all that He witnessed and experienced while prosecuting His work in Judea, He could scarcely have been the grandly elevated and consecrated soul He was. It was the very surpassing fineness of His quality which doomed Him to know it at times, and to know it in the presence of things, in the presence of which the serenity of others, less finely shaped and swayed, might remain undisturbed. Should we think much of a man, however upright and blameless, who could view certain scenes, or encounter certain doings, and not be fired with indignation? Not to be incensed here or there, if only for an instant, and with quick subsidence of the heat, would argue an inferior nature—a defect of moral

sensibility. More than half our angers may be foolish or mean; ebullitions of which to be ashamed, denoting weakness and infirmity, culpable in the duration allowed them, in their disproportion to the exciting cause, or for the unwholesome elements they include, and the ugly sediment accompanying them.

But there is a holy and beautiful wrath—a wrath signifying grace, flashed from goodness—with which we must needs burn momentarily on occasions, if the spirit be healthful and true. Nor is it a mere useless ferment. It may press and impel us to do for the right, or in defence of the injured, in aid of improvement and reform, as otherwise we should not have done, or should not have done with the same energy and force. A man's righteous indignation may sweep him on to righteous action which otherwise he would not have taken, or to action at least, more vigorous and effective. He is kindled by it to a determination and courage which else he might not have shown, and with it, perhaps, is more beneficially arousing to others. His power and influence are the greater for it.

How much less brave, generously intent, or usefully enterprising, men would have been at times had they not been angry! And even

inordinate anger—the anger which is too hot and fierce, and operates mischievously—may spring from an unusual depth of noble feeling, may be the shadow cast by an unusual elevation and consecration of soul. ‘What a pity,’ we may say, ‘that he should have been so hot and fierce!’ Yet for him to have been less so, he would have had to be less rich and intense in that for which we admire him.

‘Anger,’ to quote the words of a writer, ‘is one form or manifestation of the life of the spirit; it is the reaction of the spirit against what would chill it, and brings the life-blood to the surface. We esteem and value the life according to the nature of the reaction; the indignation proves the man. If there be no reaction he is torpid, lethargic, moribund. If the reaction be most vivid and strong against that which threatens his self-interest, the life that comes to the window and shows itself is of a low type, the life of the selfish man. If, on the contrary, he scarcely rises in action against threats to his pocket, his goods, or his comfort, except to take some cold precautionary movement of prudence; but blazes up instantly, when truth and virtue are assailed, when the worthy are maligned, the poor oppressed, or the weak trampled on—then, it is a noble life that we

see in evidence, resenting injustice, cruelty, and wrong.'

One gauge of a man's character will be found in the answer to the question, 'What makes him angry?' And what was it now, that provoked here the anger of Jesus? There was enough, we may think, to have irritated in that silent watching of the Pharisees—that silent, malignant watching to find Him transgressing, with the hope that He would do something to afford them a ground for indicting Him. The presence round Him of those hostile carping critics who were always dogging His steps to catch Him tripping; the consciousness of their eyes as they stood craning forward to see what His action would be—must it not have been disturbing to Him? We can imagine Him feeling hampered and oppressed by it; can imagine its having the effect of unfitting or weakening Him somewhat for the healing work He wanted to perform; that He might have to struggle for His wonted freedom and fluency against its fettering influence. For who has not known sometimes the fettering influence of captious, censorious, or unsympathetic spectators—a difficulty in proceeding as we would, a lessening of power under their inspection; and we could have excused Him had

it been that He grew angry at last under the silent, snarling watch of the Pharisees.

Or some may suggest that His anger might be impatience at their unwillingness to see as He saw, to recognise and admit the truth of His principles ; impatience of their blindness, and His failure to impress them with His appeal, to win them over to His way of thinking ; that He might be vexed and fretted because they would not respond at all to His sentiments, would not be converted to His views ; because, in spite of His clear reasoning, none of them could be brought to agree with Him, and He was left still alone in their midst.

Some lofty and earnest souls have allowed themselves to be thus vexed and fretted ; it has angered them more or less that they have lifted up their voice in vain ; that men heard their doctrine without accepting or heeding it. They have fumed at not being able to gain a following, or to command attention to the vision that possessed them, to the ideas they felt to be just and true :

‘ Children (as such forgive them) have I known,
Ever in their own eager pastime, bent
To make the incurious bystander, intent
On his own swarming thoughts, an interest own—

58 *Jesus, Sabbath-Breaking and Wrathful.*

‘Too fearful or too fond to play alone.

Do thou, whom light in thine own inmost soul
(Not less thy boast) illuminates, control
Wishes unworthy of a man full-grown.

‘What though the holy secret, which moulds thee,
Moulds not the solid earth? though never winds
Have whispered it to the complaining sea?

‘Nature’s great law, and law of all men’s minds,
To its own impulse every creature stirs;
Live by thy light, and earth will live by hers!’

But now, the anger of Jesus was stirred, it is said, when, having asked the Pharisees, ‘Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?’ they held their peace; and the Evangelist states that His anger meant grief at ‘the hardness of their hearts.’ This, of course, is only the Evangelist’s explanation, yet it was doubtless the true one. St. Mark, I am sure, was right; what inflamed Him was not their hostile watching or their mental unreceptiveness, but ‘the hardness of their hearts’—hardness as evinced in their refusal to answer His question; for why did they hold their peace? why would they not openly concede at once what could not be inwardly denied—that it was lawful on the Sabbath to do good rather than to do harm, to save life rather than to kill—but that the concession would have declared Him justified in

healing the man, and they would sooner adhere to their poor ceremonial notions, and escape the humiliation of surrendering them, than countenance the relief of a suffering fellow-creature.

What mattered his relief in comparison with the maintenance of their crotchets and the avoidance of the confession that they were in the wrong? Sooner would they continue to interpose between Jesus and an act of compassion; sooner would they obstruct His ministry to human need than acknowledge themselves vanquished in argument or give up their cherished ecclesiastical rules.

Their silence betokened a hard, inhuman selfishness, and it was this that incensed Him—that these religious professors, these claimants to a superior sanctity, should be found ready to oppose blessing for another in deference to their own pride and prejudice, was more than He could bear with calmness, and the momentary flash of wrath that struck from Him was the involuntary expression of a Divine charity—the inverted image of His nobleness.

JESUS, AND THE THREE BIRTHS.

‘Jesus was born in Bethlehem.’—MATT. ii. 1.

‘Lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him.’—MATT. iii. 16.

‘Until Christ be formed in you.’—GAL. iv. 19.

WE find among the recorded sayings of Jesus the affirmation, ‘Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ Now, nothing is more true than that we all are born a second time to become men. For, beginning as mere animals, something other and higher gradually awakens in us; gradually a new life—the mental and moral—emerges, and we enter upon a new phase of being.

Or, again, there is a childishness, a youthfulness which must be transcended, out of which we must pass into something steadier and stronger; and when the former is retained and lingers on, we remark that the person has not

advanced to his due completion—has not unfolded to a man. He is regarded rather contemptuously as an instance of arrested development.

There are traits pretty and pleasing enough in childhood, and features of character appropriate or tolerated in youth, which in later years are unseemly and disfiguring. We insist that in later years they should be left behind, that different traits and features should have made their appearance.

But more than this: it may be affirmed that none ever came to achieve superior excellence, to be great or do greatly, to obtain a kingdom and reign, who have not undergone a crisis of regeneration. With apparent suddenness or by degrees a change has taken place in their previous thought and feeling; they have been moved to some particular choice or decision which has created a fresh start, a fresh departure, from whence they have begun to aim and aspire as they had not before. Some revolutionizing or determining impression has been received; some conviction has stirred within and fastened on them.

In the midst of their loitering or incertitude a constraining voice has whispered, 'Here is the path to be trodden; up and walk therein!'

In the midst of their indulgence or content a purpose has formed in them, an unwonted earnestness has seized and possessed them; they have experienced a new sense of capacity or destiny, a new sense of vocation and duty—have caught sight of possibilities till then undiscerned, and have collected and girded themselves to try and realize these.

Many can look back to a time—to an hour, perhaps—when that occurred within them which fixed the line of action they have been since pursuing, when they began to be what they have since become, to see things differently with a vision which gave them another impulse, and disturbed and diverted the current of their life.

From that time, from that hour, they say, it was no more with us as it had been; we then underwent a transition, the transition in mind or heart which has issued in our present expression or attainment.

Of such transitions, some special outward circumstance, some quickening encounter by the way, some great sorrow or disappointment, perhaps, may be recognised as the occasion and exciting means; but without some such inward crisis—sharply distinct and vivid in the consciousness, or gradual and comparatively

imperceptible—none have ever grown to aught of famous or fine fulfilment, none have ever bloomed richly or wrought grandly.

Now, in Jesus—the typical man—this would, of course, be exemplified, and was. He illustrated in Himself the law He stated, and had His own second birth between Bethlehem and Calvary.

So far from proceeding without any episode of regeneration, there was a point in His history at which He was discomposingly born again, into something more and other than He had been; when a fresh consciousness awoke in Him, a consciousness of latent gift and power, the consciousness of a Divine call, which He had not heard till then, of a Divine mission assigned Him which till then He had not known; when the vague dreams and yearnings of His youth in the village of Nazareth gave place to clear sight and definite determination, and His subsequent attitude toward the religious ideas and formulas of the land, His subsequent career of work and suffering, was decided.

The event, His second birth, is described as having happened after He had joined with the people in their rite of confession and repentance, and is depicted in the words, ‘Lo, the heavens

opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit descending like a dove and lighting upon Him !'

Then it was that a sudden soul-rousing, soul-deepening illumination flooded Him, that He became alive to Himself, to the meaning of the dumb motions that had filled His breast, to Jehovah's presence with Him and claim on Him, and knew the way He must take, the burden He must thenceforth bear.

Then it was that the brooding, sighing, restless youth began to be the concentrated, consecrated man, that 'Jesus born in Bethlehem' began to change and greaten into Christ; and it was decreed that He should live and die as He did. He whom the Spirit drove for awhile into the wilderness was quite another than He who had lately come to the banks of the Jordan from Nazareth. Slumbering depths in Him were broken up; a hand beckoned Him which He had not seen, and He surrendered to the beckoning hand. If He had not, if He had resisted or held back, the Christ whom we have known, and whose inspiring influence the world has felt and owned, would never have been. If He had not surrendered, how different things would have been for Himself and, through Him, for men! It was the turning-point with

Him, from whence, according to His behaviour, the road was either to decline or climb—the pivot on which His future hinged. Such pivots there are in every life—moments on which its after-character hangs suspended, waiting for our action to fix it; and so often we darken our destiny with a darkness never to be dispersed, so often miss fortune—miss gaining the proffered crown—miss becoming what we might have become, just because we have refused or neglected to respond duly in some hour when light broke in or convictions kindled, when the heavens opened to us and the holy dove fluttered down. We felt the movement of the Spirit, but did not resign ourselves—would not allow it to lead us into the wilderness; and the heavens closed without enduing us—closed to open no more as then, and the dove that would have settled flew away.

The one important thing, the one essential for ensuring that the realization of your best possibilities shall be reached, is simply to let the better thought—the higher feeling—have its way with you unhindered whenever it rises and presses—is simply to give yourself up to it and suffer it to rule. Whatever we may think or say, however we may complain of weakness, we are not denied power; power from above

visits us now and again, and the only need is that we permit the visiting power to overcome *our* weakness.

But now, because Jesus yielded as He did to the heavenly influx, He was born yet again; further regenerations were accomplished in Him. To Him who had freely received and entertained what was offered, more was given. We might have predicted that it would be so, that He who had consented to be led into the wilderness by the Spirit that came upon Him, would not remain where He was, but would be led on thereafter to fresh things beyond.

Here, indeed, is the secret of noble inconsistencies in some—inconsistencies, so called, involved in growth and advance, in ascending to truer conceptions, greater aims. Here is the secret often of an observed difference between men; when, for instance, one is always open to conviction—always ready and prompt to discern what of right or worth there may be in the new; and again and again, perhaps, changes his views, relinquishing the old for the new; while another is never accessible to argument; and never moving forward, call or invite what may, is always strictly consistent with his past.

Here often is the secret of the difference—

that the one had begun by admitting unreservedly some light that rose upon his mind, by hearkening to and following some inner voice which he heard speak with authority; and the other had begun by doing the reverse—had declined at starting to be swayed by some breath of the Spirit that blew within him, and was left thereby dim of eye and dull of hearing, unreceptive and unsusceptible; for such is the penalty—the life-long penalty—that may be incurred by early unfaithfulness to visions of the soul.

But Jesus was submissive to His first vision on the banks of the Jordan, and, as the result, went on from more to more. Traces of growth and change between the time of His baptism and the end may be found in the record, if we will but recognise them; for example, He commences His ministry with an evidently firm persuasion that the kingdom of heaven, which He was charged to proclaim and promote, was for Israel alone, and, with all His countrymen's indifference and contempt for the world outside, the Gentiles were dogs, and need not expect to share in the promised good things of God. So strong in Him were these feelings that, in sending out His Apostles to preach the Gospel of the kingdom, He

expressly prohibited their going at all in the way of the Gentiles, or even to any city of the Samaritans, and, when once appealed to for help by a poor heathen woman, told her in stern tones that He was not sent for the service of aliens, and that she must cease troubling Him, only yielding at last to her unyielding importunity.

But later on what a difference ! He must e'en Himself visit Samaria, and, entering a certain town of the heretical land, remained labouring there for some days ; while, when some of His Apostles brought Him word that they had lately taken upon them to forbid one whom they had met casting out unclean spirits in his name, because he followed not the Master, the Master, whose approval they had doubtless anticipated, turned on them, to their surprise, with the rebuke, ' Forbid him not ; he must be accepted and owned by us, whoever he may be, who is doing a good work.'

When, again, a company of Greeks, sojourning in Jerusalem, desired an interview with Him, instead of avoiding He welcomed them, rejoicing over the interest they showed in His ministry ; and at another time spoke of other sheep of His, not of the Jewish fold, whom he craved the opportunity of seeking out.

Here, now, were signs of a remarkable change in Him, of progress from early narrower to much broader views and sympathies, of His having learnt to be nobly inconsistent with Himself, with what he had once thought and felt.

Having surrendered to the Spirit when it first stirred and illumined His soul, it had touched Him to yet finer issues, had carried him in time whither He had not dreamt of being borne; and we may watch Him, it seems to me, in the process of transition, may detect, in reading the record, the means by which He was taught to think and feel so differently, the educational circumstances in His course by which He had profited. Would they not be such circumstances as His unwilling encounter with the Syro-Phœnician woman and the acquaintance it obliged Him to make with attractive features in her character, with her humility, her meekness, her reverential persistence withal; and His meeting again with a foreigner like the Roman centurion, whose sentiments and expressions are said to have astonished Him and to have drawn from Him the confession that never in Israel had He witnessed faith to be compared to his?

From this confession may we not infer that

it was the coming across certain Gentiles from time to time in whom singular grace and worth were displayed—grace and worth at once surprising Him and compelling His admiration, which contributed to the change in His ideas; that through contact with these instances of Gentile grace and worth, and meditation on them, He was led gradually to acknowledge to Himself that the Lord's people were not confined to the house of Israel, that hearts beat outside, prepared and destined to receive the good seed of the kingdom, until He came to embrace in His regard, and to yearn over, those whom He had formerly ignored and sought to shun; that so were acquired the broader views and sympathies with which He ended?

Here we may see Him growing, even as we grow if rightly tempered under the experiences and tuitions of life, becoming more just in judgment, more liberal in thought, more superior to prejudice, expanding into larger tolerance and wider love.

But the educational circumstances in our path are not always effective with us. We pass through them often without being duly instructed by them; we fail to appropriate their lessons.

And what was it which gave Him His open-

ness of mind to the teaching of things encountered, which rendered Him susceptible to instructive impressions from them? Was it not His previous loyal yielding to the voice that had spoken in His soul—the fact of His having resigned Himself to be led by the Spirit that had moved within Him? Would He otherwise have learnt Divinely as He did, from what He saw by the way, in Roman soldier or Phœnician woman?

But, in conclusion, though ‘Jesus born in Bethlehem’ had been born again, and born again to further regenerations, the birth of the *Christ* was not yet; that was a later event, for the *Christ* was born only when He began to be formed in men as a religious idea and passion.

The birth of Jesus which we have just been commemorating was not the birth of the Christ, neither, indeed, was the second birth of Jesus, when the Spirit came upon and captured Him to His subsequent growth and change; these were but the promise of it and the preparations for it. The birth of the Christ was the *effect* of Jesus in the world. The Christ was born, or began to be, when at length, after His death, His Apostles went forth with His sentiments and sympathies possessing them, to be communi-

cated by them to numbers here and there, and a new moral ideal arose upon men's view and obtained command over their hearts.

Jesus lived and laboured, was perfected, and died, and *then* came the *real* Christ-birth, in the development of the Christian ideal and its re-modelling influence on human characters and lives.

It is all very well to celebrate annually the birth of Jesus and to contemplate with admiration His historic figure, but He was given to give existence to more than Himself—to bring about the formation within us of the Christ idea and passion.

This is the birth of the Christ, not an outward circumstance, but an inward event and process—an event of repeated occurrence, a process ever renewed and continued in the realm of moral soul.

He is born for any of us only in proportion as the Christ idea and passion is formed within us, and then He is, whether we know Jesus, the man of Galilee, the sufferer of Calvary, or not.

He is not the arrival of a person outside us, but the generation of a principle in us; not an object beheld, but an impulse and a constraint felt.

For some who acknowledge and are conversant with Jesus there is no Christ—for those who are open-handed and generous, compassionate and considerate, once a year, because it is Christmas, while at other times, and through the rest of the year, they are mainly self-centred and selfish, with little thought of others' claims, or care for others' needs—for such there is no Christ; He has never been born.

The Christ is born where, if Jesus be not called Lord, the will of His Father is done, or where, again, certain old beliefs concerning Jesus are renounced, to the incurring of reproach or trouble for conscience' sake, in obedience to sincere and earnest conviction; 'men abandoning Him,' as one has said, 'to become His disciples indeed.' The Christ is born where one dares danger or loss to be true; where, breaking bonds of convention that bound him, or in quiet defiance of the supposed authority of great names and prevalent opinion, one reverentially resolves to take his stand and shape his course according to the light that has shone into his soul.

The Christ is born when we rise out of the poor, mean, narrow self-life into the larger life of love; when we are anxious to help and

serve, or are capable of sacrifice for high ends; when the spirit in us strives with the flesh for victory, and the evils and miseries of the world oppress us; when to be just and good and ministerial seems to us the grand success, and the worst perdition infidelity to our own best thought; when our interest in, and zeal for, human progress is strong, and nothing is able to impair our reverence for human nature, or to quench our hope for the future of man; when, in the latest words of the great prophet-poet whom we have just laid in his grave :

‘We never turn our back, but march breast forward,
Never doubt the clouds will break;
Never dream, if right be worsted, wrong will triumph;
Hold we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.’

Even so come, Lord Jesus! Let Him come, thus, in our becoming; otherwise for us He has not come, and there is no holy Advent to be thankful for and rejoice over.

Let us begin the New Year with a new acceptance of the Christian ideal, and a new surrender of ourselves to be swayed and governed by it, ‘until the Christ be formed in us.’

This is the Divine birth toward the accom-

plishment of which Jesus was given to serve ;
as an old German mystic sang two centuries
ago :

‘ Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born,
But not within thyself, thy soul will be forlorn ;
The cross of Golgotha thou lookest to in vain
Unless within thyself it be set up again.’

THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

‘For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink ; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.’—
ROM. xiv. 17.

THE kingdom of God ! [The kingdom of God, then, is the realization of our human nature’s dream and desire, the fulfilment for us of that which we are universally wishing to experience, and reaching out after. It is the object of universal pursuit attained ; the answer to the continual cry of humanity. For what is it that is really sought in our manifold and diverse seekings ? What is the real end and aim of all labour, but these three things in which St. Paul represents the kingdom of God to consist—righteousness, and peace, and joy ?] Men everywhere are looking wistfully, they would admit, for peace and joy ; this is what they want, and would fain get if they could by any means ; what they feel, moreover, that they

ought to have, and cannot help regarding as their proper inheritance, the inheritance to be claimed by them, and the hope of gaining it is the meaning and mainspring of their various activities. These are for the most part a series of experiments with the view of securing it. 'The endlessly diversified forms of human activity are but differing expressions of one and the same sentiment, but the several shapes which, according to individual constitution, character, and circumstances, are assumed by the same animating principle—the desire of satisfaction, of happiness. It is this which, on the one hand, leads the miser to hoard wealth, and on the other, the spendthrift to squander it; which makes the brave court danger, and the timid shun it; which influences alike the philosopher and the clown, the grave, earnest student and the giddy sensualist, the man of business, the man of pleasure, the man of letters, the man of ambition, the man of art, the man of religion.' [Wide asunder as ~~their~~ ^{our} paths may lie, ~~all are united, in being moved~~ ^{we see} ~~and swayed by it, all are, in quest of a common goal.~~ 'Who will show us what is good?' 'Where are peace and joy to be found?' is the language of all mortal scheming and toil. And as to righteousness,] who does not carry

within him some idea and vision of it, some idea and vision which, though he would, may be, he cannot altogether banish from his mind, nor avoid being somewhat affected and governed by? Who, but for the temptation that dogs him, but for some impeding circumstances without, and opposing appetites within, would not rather do right than wrong? Or who, in his conscious wrongness, and while obstinately adhering thereto, would not welcome the assurance of his eventual conversion to the right? [‘Would that I could be made right!’ is the frequent sigh of thousands whom folly and error hold captive.] Some day they trust they may be: ‘Some day,’ they say to themselves, perhaps, for the quieting of that within them which is dissatisfied—‘some day, later on, we will try to be.’ And amidst existing confusions and disorders and inequalities of society, toward the reduction of which we may be attempting nothing, and to which we may be unworthily consenting, are we not always anticipating the while some ultimate rightening of men and things, always ready to believe that the future is destined to bring some ‘nobler moods of life, with sweeter manners, purer laws’—always hearing afar off the bells that shall

‘Ring out old shapes of foul disease ;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold ;
Ring out the thousand wars of old ;
Ring in the thousand years of peace’ ?

Yes, it is for the peace, and joy, and righteousness, in which, according to the Apostle, the kingdom of God consists, that our human heart cries, whether with strong longing and effort, or in faint and fitful dream.

And we can accept—can we not ?—the order, the exact order, in which the three elements of the kingdom are here arranged : righteousness, peace, joy. We recognise that the foundation of peace, its necessary antecedent, the tree on which alone it blossoms, the seed from which alone it unfolds, is rightness ; that to have it in trueness we must begin with and abide in this.

It has been sought often, and found, too, for awhile, apart from, with disregard for, and through violation of this ; but when thus found, we have learned to distrust it, to doubt its durability and genuineness. We have seen it then, soon scattered, soon broken up, and issuing, perhaps, in worse tumult and trouble than before, its hollowness proved, and the misery of those who had relied on it. ‘ Yes,’ we have said, ‘ peace obtained by indifference

to or divergence from the right has no solidity ; is but a delusion and a snare ; peace built on wrongness is a house which, however seemingly substantial and firm, cannot stand.'

So often, in truth, has pleasant quiet been made that was but a breeding of storm, when made out of disobedience to some moral law, with consent to some iniquity. True, it is not always peace at once, from rightness ; but often only through intermediate, long, lingering tumultuousness, with confused noise, and much burning of fire, and garments rolled in blood ; peace for which one must wait with faith and patience. Not always into 'green pastures, and by still waters' does the way of righteousness lead, but often, and perhaps to the end, into regions of tempest and by seas that roar, yet is there always amidst all, its own special peace attending and following, and whose sweet company is not to be had except in treading and straining along that boisterous path.

But can joy be said to grow from peace ? Most certainly. In fact, we often miss it, and cannot be visited by it just because we are wanting in peace. One must be already somewhat tranquil-minded and content to be open to its visit. Again and again sources of happi-

ness are beside us to which we are blind, which, though so near, remain sealed for us, because we are inwardly perturbed. Had we not been thus perturbed, we should have seen and drawn from them. Nothing tends more to deprive us of pleasures and delights that might have been tasted than our possession with ruffling anxiety and care. Once freed from this, and a new susceptibility of receiving pleasure and delight has ensued in us, things within view have then become capable of charming us as they had not been. In growing calm we have become more easily gladdened, more alive to what there was about us to gladden. Our calming was like the melting of the ice in a frozen harbour, which affords entrance at last to the richly-freighted ships that had been kept waiting outside, unable to enter and discharge their cargoes of spices. Why is it that we are so much more pleased to-day than we were yesterday? that the same scene has so much more in it to set us singing, but that we are more at ease than we were yesterday? 'Wordsworth's inborn religious placidity,' writes one, 'had matured in him a quite unusual sensibility to the sights and sounds of the natural world, to the flower and its shadow on the stone, the cuckoo and its

echo, the pliant harebell swinging in the breeze, the sweetness of a common dawn, the dance

‘Of the golden daffodils,
Beside the lake, beneath the trees.’

Yes, mental placidity gives sensibility to many joys of life which in its absence would not thrill or touch us at all, opens our ear to the music of the spheres] and to music in common sounds not otherwise audible, [and causes the spirit of delight to come to us often on very tiny wings]. Is it not so? Have we not found it so now and again, that peace brings joy in its wake?

But the truth, you know, is never all on one side; is sometimes fulfilled and completed in contradictions. If it lies in what you have just said, it lies also in the precise opposite of that, and to have it all in wholeness, and not in fragments merely, you must proceed to say that also.

So we may reverse the order of the words in the text, and they will be no less true. For while peace brings joy, it is at the same time itself produced or promoted by joy. A great joy comes to us, and leaves it behind, like a still, dewy evening after a blazing summer day, or a stretch of smooth shining sand after a

high tide's retreat. We had been fretted rather by the little daily troubles and vexations of our lot; the daily burden weighed heavily, and drew from us some grumbling. Then, in the midst, a great joy came to us, a temporary rapture of delight; and when it had passed, how much more quietly we were able to bear, how much lighter seemed the daily burden, no longer chafing and bruising as before. We were able to accept with equanimity what we grumbled at before; went on our way, for a while, at least, with a more contented mind, in a serener temper. Peace, blessed peace, rested on our heart because a great wave of gladness had swept over it. The transient ecstasy has left us stronger to endure, has lifted us somehow above what depressed or perturbed, has made the stony road smoother to our feet. Who is there who has not gained placidity from having been exhilarated, whom a season of mirth and laughter has not helped to calm? A certain disordering and deranging of ourselves may have been the effect of some delights that we have had by the way; but many delights we have known that have given us through the days that followed new tranquillity.

Then, again, if righteousness conduce to

peace, it is equally true that peace contributes often to righteousness—oh, very often! Men are often less virtuous or well behaved than they might be; are often wrong in their tempers and doings for lack of it. It is for lack of it that they stumble and grovel as they do, that temptation prevails over them, or their response to the facts and circumstances of life is unworthy. Their inward *disease* is morally enfeebling, morally perverting, and leads them to seek relief in low indulgences, to which otherwise they would not have been drawn; to utterances and actions of which they would not otherwise be guilty. It spoils their natural amiability, obstructs the expression of the good that is in them. Not in mere happier surroundings, but with a happier mind, they would be ever so much nicer or nobler than they are. Were they but happier in their mind, we should see them beginning to stray and stoop less, and a beauty begin to appear upon them that had not appeared. Have we not seen it once and again—a gradual strengthening of the whole man, as of a palm-tree from pressure, a gradual sweetening and bettering of him, simply through a dispersion of some mental uncomfortableness, some mental fret and worry?

There is no greater enemy often to righteousness, and our growth therein; and, on the other hand, nothing that would often minister more to its furtherance in us, than our liberation from mental fret and worry. Beware of carking care and melancholy mood, beware of harbouring these! For these, within doors, open the door continually to other and worse visitors. Cultivate inner calm, if you would do most excellently; and if you would assist to promote rightness in others, and avoid hindering it, study to guard and help as much as possible their serenity of soul. We must needs sometimes be the means of disquieting others, and must not shrink at times from speech and conduct calculated to distress or discompose; but never risk affecting any thus lightly or unnecessarily; seek rather to be peace-creating, peace-aiding influences, for, as the Apostle James insisted, 'the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace, of them that make peace.'

Righteousness, peace, joy—such is the kingdom of God. But while recognising the desirableness of these acquisitions, and aiming at them for ourselves, or anxious and labouring, perhaps, for their diffusion, there is a mistake to which we are liable with regard to

the means—a mistake against which the text warns us in the words, ‘not by meat and drink, but by Holy Spirit.’ For, what St. Paul meant to enforce, I should say, was not that the kingdom of God consisted in righteousness and peace and joy, in contradistinction to meat and drink; but that its righteousness and peace and joy were secured and maintained by Holy Spirit rather than by meat and drink. None of his readers supposed for a moment that it consisted in the latter. They were scarcely so ignorant or unspiritual as that; but, in entire agreement with him as to its nature, if [they] were much engrossed just now with questions relating to meat and drink, namely, with warm dispute among themselves as to whether flesh offered for sale in the market or put upon some tables at social feasts that had formed part of idol sacrifices and had come from heathen altars could consistently be eaten by Christians—if they were greatly agitated and exercised about this, some maintaining that it ought not to be eaten, and rigidly refusing to touch it, and others insisting that it might be without any inconsistency, and ostentatiously using the liberty of which they were persuaded, both parties attaching the utmost importance to the course they pursued,

the one strenuous for abstinence, and urging it as a solemn duty, and the other condemning and seeking to draw from it as a pitiable weakness—if they were acting thus, it was from a common zeal for the kingdom of God, and with the idea of upholding and furthering thus its righteousness, peace, and joy. [‘Oh,’ but St. Paul says, ‘this controversy and clamour of yours about meat and drink, this making such a point of tasting or not tasting certain food, is *not* serviceable; for the righteousness and peace and joy of the kingdom have their root and nourishment in Holy Spirit, and not in any partaking of or refraining from certain food. You, with your present fuss over meat and drink, instead of forwarding its righteousness and peace and joy, are operating rather to hinder them.’] Since, as he had already lamented in the chapter, they were grieving one another, putting stumbling-blocks and occasions to fall in one another’s way, and were tending to destroy in each other the calm processes and growth of the higher life; and the Holy Spirit in their breasts, the source and sustenance of righteousness, peace, and joy, was being disturbed and marred by the excitement of anger, animosity, and various ill-feeling. For the sake of the kingdom in which

they were all interested, let them cease laying so much stress on eating and not eating, cease from their heat over the matter, and combine rather to save and guard the Holy Spirit within them, upon which the fulfilment of the kingdom depended.

And how often, like these Christians of Rome, have good men, by their undue scruples or strictness regarding little things and their undue zeal for them, contributed to thwart instead of promote the advance of greater things—greater things, perchance, the promotion of which they desired! By their zeal for formularies, for questions of ritual and ceremony, or some religious Shibboleth or dogma, real Christianity has suffered at their hands, sorely wounded in the house of its friends. ‘Squabbling for words upon the altar floor, they have rent the book in struggles for the binding;’ or have let go, and prevented the discernment of weightier matters of the law with their insistence on ‘mint, anise, and cummin’; in their hot strife for doctrines about Jesus, have lost themselves and frustrated or impeded in others the Spirit of Jesus. It is the case, moreover, and not seldom, that Holy Spirit in another, in another whom we meant to restore and righten—in a son or daughter, for instance

—has been frustrated or impeded with our ‘little hoard of maxims,’ of the observance of which we were too jealous, because we would not depart from them in the least, and were too unyieldingly particular here and there, too stringent on certain points, when, had we been less so, more lenient, more ready to give way, to relax and modify, Holy Spirit would have been aided and nurtured, to outcomings of righteousness, with peace and joy.

While, again—it is possible, as one has said, ‘so to pursue even great and noble ends as to become ourselves in their pursuit thin and impoverished in spirit, diminishing thus the sum of perfection in the world at its very sources.’ [For, indeed, the spirit in us is the chief thing, the thing of supreme importance; not doing, but *being*, a certain prevailing disposition of the mind, since this is the source and shaping force of all. We are apt to think too much of what we are doing, and too little of what we are becoming. In comparison with the latter, the former is of small moment; not the deed, but the heart, is the measure of our moral stature.] The deed is ephemeral, the heart eternal; the deed is finite, the heart infinite; the deed is but coin, the heart the mint for coining; it is the immortal ‘I AM’ underlying

all that is done from day to day, and when all is done and past, surviving. One may be poorer, meaner than his action; and then there is reason for lamenting, however fine the action; or finer, and then there is cause for congratulation, however imperfect or faulty the action. Our greatest dignity and value lies in just *being* something—something that is beautiful—rather than in performing something; in the fine trees we are secretly growing rather than in any fruit we have grown and brought to market.

We are apt again, with a view to the furtherance of righteousness, and peace, and joy, to think too much of the outward, to depend too much upon outward conditions and appliances as a means of ensuring these. They come always, when they come, not from meat and drink, but from holy, healthy spirit; not from external arrangements and rearrangings, but from internal disposings. True, as, while idea acts on environment, environment in its turn modifies idea, so by meat and drink the Spirit itself may be helped or hindered; with indifference to, or carelessness about, meat and drink, we may often hurt or obstruct the Spirit both in ourselves and others. And with some new ordering of outward things, it shall be ministered

to in ourselves and others. Yet it is the Spirit, after all, that determines the effect of all meats and drinks, rendering them sweetly serviceable or otherwise, giving them more or less wholesomeness in proportion as *it* is healthy; and save as *it* is holy, nothing is holy, nothing strong.

Toward the diffusion of righteousness, and peace, and joy among men, seek supremely to help the good spirit in men. And with regard to yourself, cherish ever for your guidance, as the truest and wisest of words ever spoken, the word of the ancient sage, 'Keep thine heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.'

THE SON OF MAN, ASHAMED OF, AND COMING IN GLORY.

‘Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels.’—LUKE ix. 26.

THE phrase ‘the Son of man,’ so often occurring in the Gospels, and placed there on the lips of Jesus, was an importation obviously from the prophet Daniel’s vision of a righteous kingdom to be established eventually by a great Divine manifestation, in which he saw one ‘like unto the Son of man coming with the clouds of heaven, to whom was given everlasting dominion.’ The phrase was taken from thence and applied by His Apostles as a title of Jesus, while they represent Him as using it continually. But whether in using it He really meant to claim it for Himself, to identify Himself with the Son of man, is somewhat doubtful. If in some passages He certainly *seems* to do so, where, however, the *seeming*

may be due to the hand of His reporters, there are many other passages in which He does *not* appear to have intended any personal application of the name, but to have employed it rather in an imaginative emblematic sense, as a mystic symbol of something outside and beyond Him, of some Divine event or development to which He looked forward, when, for instance, again and again, as in the verse just read, He speaks of the Son of man in the third person, saying not, 'I the Son of man,' but 'He.' In the vision of Daniel the expression had apparently no individual significance, but was the form apparently in which the seer beheld symbolized 'the ultimate victory of truth and equity, the goal of the good, the consummation of the purposes of God.' And similarly in the mouth of Jesus it seems to me to have been, very often at least, just His personification of the kingdom of heaven on earth completed and triumphant; or of humanity finally redeemed and perfected; of the true sin-emancipated and fully spiritualized man that should be, when man, thus emancipated and spiritualized, would be the crown and lord of all, clothed with the splendour and the power determined for him; in the light of which latter sense, at all events, I shall venture to read and interpret

the text: 'Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels.'

'Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words,' says Jesus. Such is his description of certain conduct which he deprecates. And what was the conduct thus described? None, of course, could be charged with being ashamed of Him and His words who had not been at all touched and impressed by them; who had seen in Him nothing to admire or reverence; and felt in Him nothing of claim. To be ashamed of Him would be, while seeing something of His truth and beauty, and feeling something of His claim, to have held back from accepting and following His guidance; to have refused or neglected to act in accordance with His teaching; to have allowed fear, indolence, love of ease, or any worldly considerations, to prevent surrender to Him, as when men turn aside from the path of duty revealed to them, decline to be loyal to a principle the justness and rightness of which their hearts have secretly acknowledged; or consent for gain's sake, for comfort's sake, to violate their moral sense, to decide and choose in contradiction of their

vision of the best. These things, alas! are often done; such infidelity in some form or other is all too common.

If there were any about Jesus, as He seems to have thought it possible there might be, to whose reason and conscience words of His had appealed with some convincing force, and who were, nevertheless, content to be disregarding them, to be flouting and denying them in their lives, they were but types of thousands who have since lived, of many among us to-day, who shrink from being true to the voice of the Lord heard within them, by whom the Divine that has flashed upon them is practically disowned and scorned. How meanly sometimes are men ashamed—when they are ashamed, for example, to admit their mistakes, to stand by a friend who is under a cloud, or to entertain and embrace worth clad in shabby garments; ashamed in their prosperity of poor relations; or in their attained social elevation, of their humble origin, of the lowliness of the place from whence they sprang! But the meanest thing of all, and of all meannesses the most self-depraving and defiling, is to be ashamed of a perceived moral obligation, in shirking it, of what our eyes have seen as the highest, in skulking from its call, and leaving it

without the homage of endeavour to respond and conform thereto !

Well, 'whosoever,' says Christ, 'is thus ashamed, of him, some day hereafter, will the Son of man be ashamed; *him*, the redeemed man, the nobler man that shall be, will hold and pronounce despicable, will look down upon from his height with pity and contempt; scarcely able to regard him as a brother, so poor and inferior will he seem, viewed from that exalted height to which humanity is destined to attain, when truth shall be the girdle of its loins, and faithfulness the girdle of its reins.'

Yes; we from our present summit are ashamed, are we not? of the ignorance, the superstition, the delusions of past times, of the coarser, narrower vision, the feebler, duller sensibilities of earlier man. We see him in many respects far down below us, groping, stumbling, imprisoned in dim valleys above which we have mounted, and feel ourselves wide asunder from him, out of all fellowship with him in the errors and follies that were his. And the larger man of the future, the more valiant and free—will he not be equally ashamed of us, to whom our summits will be as dusky vales beneath his feet; who will have transcended powers and

capacities of ours, gained perception where we are blind, and solved problems that are baffling us, with which we are still grappling in vain? What are we at our best in comparison with the creature that will be in the progress of the ages? But, how often already has the Son of man been ashamed of wrongnesses and paltrinesses that have been, in the sense of the individual man becoming, as he has improved and advanced, ashamed of himself, and of what he has done without compunction or thought with complacency in former days! The Son of man—the wiser or better man that I have grown to be—how He has blushed for previous works or ways of mine, renouncing as unworthy what I had once approved, or scorning as miserably defective what I had once deemed fine. To think, we have said, that we should ever have been guilty of that, or satisfied with that! The disgust we have felt in reviewing some earlier performance of ours of which at the time we were proud enough, the sad surprise in remembering some earlier level of conduct with which we had been content. Pitiably indeed is he who has never felt thus in the process of years, for in him, the Son of man, the wiser mind or the better soul, which in the process of years should have

been, has not come; he has lived without moving on.

And of many a one, again, who is now indulging an ill spirit, stooping to a meanness, or yielding to a temptation for which he lightly excuses himself, might it not be prophesied with certainty that some day the Son of man in him will be ashamed of this, that some day later on, in moments of solitary reflection, or on a dying bed, it will be revealed to him in its ugly culpability, to sting him with remorse and self-reproach?

But now, the Son of man, the true, redeemed man that shall be—see Him portrayed here. See what we may say concerning Him! That He will come in a threefold glory; in His own, in the Father's, and in the holy angels'. In *His own*; which is—what? What is a human creature's culmination and fulfilment, his height of distinction, the crown of his development? In other words, what is it to be a real, finished man? Well, for one thing, surely to have the soul in us supreme, fully and serenely regnant over the flesh; with whatever remains in us of ape and tiger extinguished, with the lingering beast wholly worked out; to have the soul born in us freed from all bondage and subjection to the flesh, and grown to its complete

stature ; no longer as now, like some mediæval king, opposed and thwarted by powerful and contumacious vassals, unable often to assert and enforce itself, unable often to maintain its sovereignty, and only feebly representing to the world what it is, and would fain appear but possessing perfect command, ruling perfectly in the house of our nature, with all lower appetites and passions subdued to its sway.

The production of soul, we may say, was the aim of Nature from the beginning. For that she laboured and toiled during ages upon ages, seeking by gradual ascent through ever-ascending forms of life to reach the spiritual. That was the end after which she strove and schemed, the flower which she sought to bring forth from her successive sowings and plantings, and which at last began to evolve. At last a creature appeared with the spiritual breathing in the midst of him and slowly waxing there. Here it is now, established and unfolding in the midst, but not yet by any means full-blown, full-orbed—still pressed upon, and hemmed in, and warred against by the flesh, and much encumbered, often half-stifled thereby, advancing only to be beaten back, enthroned for a time only to be driven from the throne. And salvation, what you call salva-

tion, is just the salvation of it from the obstructings, the retardings, the opposings of the flesh. Such was the salvation which Jesus contemplated when He said, 'I am come to save that which is lost'—the soul, the spiritual element existing, but lost in the flesh. He wanted to spiritualize the spirit-impregnated creature; to promote the forwarding and carrying on of Nature's evolutionary process by assisting to liberate and make triumphant the soul that had been kindled within him; and this would be to be clothed in our own glory. Until this is effected we are not clothed therewith, however we may be arrayed. Nature's purpose and evolutionary process are not fulfilled; the man she means and seeks is not realized. She waits for the spiritual in us to prevail and dominate. Whatever helps towards this, toward the greatening and further reign of soul in us, is helping to bring us to our own glory.

But further, it is the reign of soul in us without any destruction or spoiling of the flesh; not at its expense, not by mortifying or treading it down, but by subliming and carrying it up with us, by having the two hitherto unreconciled and in conflict made one, forming together no longer a jarring, warring duality, but a peaceful universe; the body not flouted

or maltreated for the sake of the spirit, but embraced, penetrated, and sanctified by it; not disowned and despised, but raised to be its married and co-operating partner. As with good gardeners, who—to quote the words of a writer—‘know a better way of conquering the wild thorn than by uprooting and destroying it, viz., by setting it in their garden and inoculating it with some queenly rose, whereby it expends its energy not upon itself, but contributes it to that which is above itself, and, as the result, becomes crowned with a glory which it could not have produced.’

Now, such was the idea of Jesus—to cultivate soul and its supremacy, without at all impairing or contemning the body. There were those about Him in His day with whom He greatly sympathized, and in fellowship with whom, on the banks of the Jordan, He began His work, because amidst the rampant carnality and corruption of the time they were striving earnestly for the dominion of the spirit; but striving for it through ascetic severities, with scourgings and maimings of the flesh, He parted from them on that ground, inspired with the conviction that soul must be saved, and nourished to the mastery, while yet we eat and drink, and refuse to seclude our-

selves firmly in the desert. The perfect man with Him was the man in whom the soul was saved and enthroned without any oppressing or deforming of the body, in whom the one was nurtured with no rude injurious starving of the other, who, instead of crushing the lower in him that the higher might be served, subdued and reconciled it to its service. And this is essential to the completion of our glory—to have the spiritual fulfilled in us with the animal consenting and in sweet accord, to move upward in company with and with the concurrence of our whole nature.

Once more, also, to have attained, I would say to a love which is all-embracing, which is no longer restricted to these and those, however it may yet vary in degree, but has risen majestically above all limiting influences, all confining ties and overflowed them—enthusiasm for family, for kindred and friends, for Church, party, and country, expanded to enthusiasm of humanity. A love to which nothing human is foreign, which feels and responds to the oneness of the race, to the one Divine life variously manifested in all and making the whole world kin. We are not, surely, full-orbed men until we have attained to this. Jesus Himself, who grew in spirit, did not begin with it, but, with

more or less exclusive zeal for His own nation, for the house of Israel, unable to take to His heart any beyond, He was for awhile the minister of God to the circumcision only, and expressly enjoined His Apostles to hold aloof in their labours from the Gentiles, to refrain from going near them. But He could not continue thus bound. Occasional involuntary contact and acquaintance with individual 'heathen' soon broadened His earlier narrowness; He learnt gradually a wider, broader sympathy; and, finally, perfected, ended with the parting injunction to His disciples, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel *to every creature.*' There were thenceforth with Him no more Jews and Gentiles, brethren and aliens, but one family of God scattered abroad over the earth, to whom the message of the Father was sent, and must be borne.

So in this respect there came in Him at last 'the Son of man.' And when all these three things which I have indicated are found exemplified in us, will it not be the advent in us of the Son of man—the coming of man in 'his own glory?'

But now, in his coming thus, He will appear also in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. Yes, in the glory of the Father—I

am persuaded—as realizing and exhibiting not merely his own perfection, but the idea of him that went before, and because of which, according to which, he has thus developed—the idea of the Eternal at length brought to pass and embodied in him, of which he will be the incarnation. Not only man finished, but this actualized and consummated in him. For, pray, what does it mean when Nature, with age-long throes and labours, with successive producings and producings, from lower to higher, and from higher to higher again, eventually produces a man, a conscious soul, a moral and spiritual being, in whom the moral and spiritual begins to prevail over the animal until it gradually rules and triumphs, to the culmination of all in love? What does it mean? It must needs mean a living idea as the source and guide and shaping secret of all; a living idea out of which the whole proceeds, of which Nature's orderly evolution is the expression. Such evolution must needs be the unfolding of idea. We cannot have chanced, surely, to become what we are through the mere blind play of dead forces.

‘Dead, but engendering life, love, pangs and fears,
Stumbling on thought, and throwing off the spheres,
Churning the universe with mindless motion.’

No, no ; we must have had our emergence and growth from idea. Looking at man rising in the midst,

‘ To roll the psalm to wintry skies,
To build him fanes of fruitless prayer,
To love, to suffer countless ills,
To battle for the True, the Just.’

We are impelled to say, This is what was meant to be ; this was the thing that Nature had in view all along, and from the beginning had planned to accomplish. And when, growing still from more to more, he is rounded and complete, his own glory reached will be the glory of the Father, of the Eternal idea fulfilled. In the grace of the fashion of him will shine the splendour of the thought and purpose of the Lord.

And upon him and in him, then, will be yet another glory, the glory, it may be said, of the holy angels, viz., of the great host, the great invisible host of influences, of events and existences that will have ministered as ministering angels to his production—for He will be the product of all the ages, the result and issue of all that has been before him ; countless things will have played their part in the long, slow work of his formation ; toward it countless things will have served through the centuries ;

the whole past will be represented in him, in that which the whole past will have contributed to his making—patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, ancient and forgotten movements, institutions, creations, and destructions, nations that have risen, flourished and decayed, thousands on thousands who have lived unknown and died unremembered—all will be represented in his fulness. And who shall say, moreover, how much we may not be indebted in our human progress and perfecting to unrecognised, unsuspected ministries, from outside this mundane sphere; to silent, secret inflowings upon us, by the way, from other worlds of the Almighty's empire?

Our earth rolls lonely in space, with no open communication between it and those other worlds, yet we may not be without our unconscious receivings from these to our help and forwarding along the upward path. Spirits from thence may be touching us often to fine issues, may often be acting on us succouringly, inspiringly, though we know it not; fulfilling thus the poet's word that 'more servants wait on us than we take notice of.' And when the Son of man comes in us at length in his own glory and in the glory of the Father, it may be that his beauty and attainment will owe some-

thing, will have been due in part, to secret aiding services which they have rendered, whom one of the New Testament Apostles believed to be ever desirous of looking, from their invisible places, into our human things.

THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR.

‘The time past of our life.’—1 PET. iv. 3.

THERE are spaces, there are moments with us when, after the manner of children, we are wholly absorbed in the present; with no wandering of thought, or mental glance aside; when the immediate scene or occupation is all-engrossing, and nothing enters from beyond to divide or distract the mind. And this, whether the happiest or not, is often the healthiest and wisest state. We frequently miss much, lose pleasure that might have been ours, or fail in place of succeeding, from inability to be held fast in the present. Because we cannot give ourselves to it entirely, unreservedly; cannot be expended or concentrated upon it without diversion, something of that which it offers us escapes our grasp, and we pass on, leaving behind good that had waited to be taken. In looking at what is

around us, we see not all that there is to see, or we see but dimly and imperfectly through being half absent the while, through straying the while to distant things, and the full joy derivable from the object is withheld from us. In performing a particular task we may, and do sometimes, send away so much force from the performance by musing afar off, by thinking, yearning, or imagining outside it; so much force which, kept at home and applied to the task, would have ensured its better and more satisfying execution. We are inwardly scattered, recalling or anticipating, regretting what has been, or foreboding what may be hereafter; and our possession of the 'now' is thereby impaired, its wealth and value are not realized by us. And this 'now' is slipping by, as we are scattered; in another instant will be gone beyond recovery, gone to return no more, with all that it had to yield of enjoyment or advantage. We cannot be too intent on it, too careful and studious to make the most of it, and should not lightly permit aught to interfere with or interrupt its due entertainment. Seize with both hands, earnestly, the flying hour. 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.'

Yet it is when the present has become the

past, and we stand looking back on it, that we draw from it often the greatest profit—profit which it had not afforded before. Its teachings are then discerned, maybe, with clearer eye, its useful lessons read and understood as they had not been. Removed from it, we get a new and truer impression of some things that belonged to it; get a truer and better view, as of a mountain too near to be seen while we remain in its vicinity, and only revealed to us in its full form and majesty when we have gone further off, and survey it from a distance; though the profit of looking back is often attended with some pain—the pain of recognising what the past held of golden opportunity that was wasted or neglected; of perceiving to our self-reproach how much more we might have been served by the means of grace with which it abounded, how much better we might and should have acted in answer to its facts and circumstances than we did.

And if the present has sometimes waited to give us of its best, its best instruction and edifying until it has become the past, it is helpful sometimes toward our right acceptance or endurance of the present, to look away from it, forgetting it, losing sight of it at intervals in reverie and dream, in imaginings of what is

not, of scenes fairer than the actual, in pleasant memories that leave us refreshed for the hard, rough road beneath our feet, or in hopes the sweetness of which renews our strength for the day's task and toil. We call to remembrance in the night some former time of song, and the surrounding darkness is softened by the recollection; or picture to ourselves and ponder some brightness in store for us, and are left treading the weary way with firmer, brisker step; as when a tired traveller through gloom and bruising storm sends on his thought before to the home welcome and the cosy seat by the fireside that awaits him at the journey's end, and bears up and battles along the more bravely for it. Again and again we may be made stronger for dealing with the actual by just allowing the mind to pay a visit to the kingdom of the ideal, and roam for a season in the green pastures, and by the still waters of fancy.

But there are moments with us when we are almost irresistibly thrown backward or forward in thought. Forward, for instance, at the point of entrance upon some new and untried sphere, of beginning to live in some new relationship, or in encountering something full of promise, in the opening of prospects for us,

such as we have not hitherto had. And backward, in the hour of some work concluded at which we have been long labouring, of reaching a goal we have been long pursuing, or on anniversaries that mark another chapter closed in our volume of existence and experience. So, the end of the year brings with it naturally a retrospective mood, inclines us to pause and revolve for a little 'the time past of our life.'

And yet, is any revolving of it worth our while? Might we not do more wisely to leave it unreverted to? There are some things in it, doubtless, that we may not care to recall, that we would rather keep thought turned from, and bury, like our dead, out of our sight, whose hauntings of us we deprecate and would fain if possible avoid: moments of horrible misery, bitter trials, disfiguring scars of which remain upon us, defeats or failures of which we are ashamed, humiliating errors or mistakes, sins into which we fell—such things as these we would rather forget, and I dare say they are better forgotten, or, at least, had better not be admitted to much meditation. Reflection on them would only serve to mortify or distress, to excite useless pain, or futile sighs of regret, deranging and depressing perhaps for present action.

But whatever our lot or course may have been, there will be always something agreeable and pleasing to remember, the remembrance of which will be refreshment or strengthening joy, to live over which again in memory will be some renewal of its delight—happy successes that crowned our labour, hours of charming intercourse with friends, beautiful scenes lighted on, readings that inspired us, great exhilarating gladnesses that visited us by the way—these are worth recalling. And then, scattered over the past are some lessons, surely, waiting to be gathered up and treasured and utilized, in which sense it may have a store of potential wealth, of negotiable property for us, which we have but to seek out and make our own if we will, and which it would be loss to miss for want of glancing back. Ah, there is wisdom there, or what may be turned to wisdom, if we will, in the shape of experiences, embedding hints for our guidance to-day and through the future, or warnings to guard and save us in present or impending dangers; in the shape of encouragements to cheer and embolden, as we note how nights of weeping were followed by mornings of joy, how we were able to face with courage what in contemplation had appalled and frightened us, how things fell

out better than we had feared, and we need not have fretted and worried as we did.

We may lose often some bit of equipment for days before us, some shield of prudence or armour of faith and hope, by omitting to bend the eye for awhile upon the past. At any rate, it is not to be put aside when we put it aside; is not to be got rid of when we throw it off, since, though vanished for ever, it still persists in us, in our present character and moral texture. We are, whether we will or no, what it has made us; carrying within us all that there was in it of virtue or folly of ours, of good or ill doing. It is gone, yet not gone; has slipped from us, yet holds us fast, and will not let us go. If some men could but escape its grasp, could but shake it from their shoulders, and be as though it had not been, how glad they would be, how much more erect they would stand to-day! The present, indeed, is not its own property, but belongs to the past, is more or less its bondsman, lorded and often cruelly tyrannized over by it. We must need behave again and again as it has determined for us, and because of it cannot do as we would, cannot alter and improve the present as we would, but can only, at the most, prepare in it for the future, sowing with effort and struggle for some

possible harvest there, working to inherit there, possibly, what, as yet, is beyond attainment. The past is in us, perhaps, in the form of some ugly habit not to be broken through as yet, but which as yet we can only be aspiring and striving against in the hope of emancipation later on. So, then, instead of bewailing the hated cleaving legacy, use the current moment in aspiring and striving to be free from it hereafter. Never mind the sadly-warped present, warped irrevocably by the action of the past, but be content so to yearn and aim the while that when the future becomes the present it may be thankful for its past, which is *our* unsatisfactory 'now,' and be all the fairer and happier for this 'now,' from the effort, immediately barren and resultless, with which it has been filled.

'The time past of our life.' We talk about it, but in pausing to look back on it, how little comparatively we see! With whatever intent peering, how much of it eludes us, and is not included in our view! We are like a traveller who, from some high ground reached, turns to survey the road along which he has come, the country through which he has passed. There in the distance are the spires of the city from which he set out, but between it and where

he now stands only certain portions, certain fragments of the way, are visible. The broad road once traversed has dwindled to a thin thread; none but a few of the more prominent objects and features of the country are discerned by him. Wholly hidden are a hundred things among which he moved during his journey. The hills are conspicuous enough, but vanished are the valleys betwixt them which he was so long in crossing. Clear before his eye rises that summit he ascended and went over, but nothing is discernible of the path on the other side up which he wearily climbed to it. So we see, in looking back, but a very small part of the life of the days behind us, of what was encountered and experienced in them, of the incidents, the circumstances, the thoughts, and emotions, and activities that filled them; no more than here and there a particular crisis, an adventure that broke the monotony of the daily round, a great joy or a great sorrow that came and went. A few days show themselves with vivid distinctness, many but dimly and hazily, and most, perhaps, not at all. All that belonged to the hour of some grand success won, we can call up, but not all that belonged to the hours of movement and progress toward it.

There is one thing to be seen always on the

road, if we care or try to see it, namely, the figure of the traveller—our own figure, we ourselves; not merely what we were doing and saying, suffering or enjoying, at different times, but what we *were* through all times, our average level of being. And the most important item for us in reviewing the past is the figure of the traveller, his mental and moral self in comparison with the self of to-day; whether we have to look up to it as something handsomer and worthier than we are now, from the grace and beauty of which we have declined, or down to it, as something which we have more or less surmounted and surpassed. Can we feel that we are somewhat superior to that—that, on the whole, instead of having deteriorated, we have improved in quality? Never mind how faulty and poor the present may be, how much it may exhibit needing correction, if only you have mounted a little above the past. But, alas! if one is conscious of inferiority to it, forced to acknowledge to himself that he has sunk below it, not in his circumstances, but in character and tone; not in physical or intellectual vigour, but in spiritual health and strength; what on earth can be sadder than to have it borne in upon us in moments of retrospect that we have lost ground in purity and

elevation of soul, in respect of the finer sympathies and affections, that our figure is less straight and erect, less nobly shaped than it was a while ago, and we farther off *than we were* from the kingdom of God and His righteousness—what on earth can be sadder? It is miserable to be haunted by what I have been that was vile or mean, but I would ten thousand times sooner be haunted thus than by what I have been that was loftier and worthier than what I am to-day. I would sooner be humiliated to the dust with remembrance of former baseness or shamefullest infirmity than hear the reproach and condemnation of a former self from which I have slid down to lower things.

It is impossible, I suppose, for any of us to review at all seriously the time past of our life without a melancholy sense of good things irretrievably wasted, of opportunities of ministering or acquiring, of giving or receiving, that were offered us in vain, which we wilfully or negligently let go by unseized, of blessed influences that met and touched us by the way, whose blessing we refused to make our own, of impressions upon us which, cherished, might have borne choice fruit, and which were not cherished; of some right, true impulses that stirred in us, and were allowed to die away un-

followed; of circumstances and experiences granted that should have proved educational, and failed to educate us, failed to discipline as they should have done. We complain sometimes of what is denied us, of our few aids and advantages; but what opportunities we have had and missed, what means and instruments of discipline have the days brought us, only to be wasted on us, from which we have drawn little or nothing of that which they were fitted to yield. Of the plentiful and various material afforded us for fashioning therefrom something of beauty, how much has been left with naught of the kind fashioned out of it. Niggardly as we may complain that life has been to us, more has been given us for sweet use and service than we have known what to do with. Many are the tuitional facts and conjunctures we have encountered that have been comparatively thrown away upon us. Let the reflection convince us that what we want for soul furtherance and forwarding, is not more dispensing to us, but more appropriating readiness and power.

Yet once more. Those of us who are at all seriously minded, at all earnest with regard to the meaning and end of existence, can hardly look back upon 'the time past of our life' without feeling its mysteriousness in relation

to this. So far as any moral idea and purpose concerning us may be imagined, what a mysterious jumble and confusion it all seems, how broken, and fragmentary, and utterly irrelevant, full of chances and changes that do not appear to have served for aught, or to have been meant to serve for aught, full of petty things and trivial happenings, for which we can find no place whatever in any supposed process of Divine education ! What is it all for, we ask, that we have gone through this queer medley and vicissitude, that we have had these cares and tears, these hopes and disappointments ? Where is the unifying significance of it all ? Where the sign of a Divine plan binding together and utilizing all ?

We can descry no trace of such plan, neither you nor I ; yet let us believe that there is one implied and pursued, though beyond our ken ; let us believe that the strange medley and vicissitude of our life is a mystic tool in the hand of a Master, with which we are being secretly shaped toward something that we see not, and that never have we experienced this or that pain or pleasure, never have we known a failure or success, never have we stumbled sadly or stood strong, but some hidden work of the Lord has been wrought in and through

all, some work contributive to ultimate blessed ends.

' Let us take to our hearts a lesson—no lesson can braver be—

From the ways of the tapestry weavers on the other side
of the sea.

It is only when the weaver stops, and the web is loosed
and turned,

That he sees the real handiwork, that the marvellous
skill is learned.

Ah ! the sight of its delicate beauty ! How it pays him
for all it cost !

No rarer, daintier work than this was ever done by the
frost.

The years of man are Nature's looms, let down from
the place of the sun,

Wherein we are weaving alway, till the mystic web is
done.

Ever blindly, but ever surely, each for himself his fate ;
We see not yet how the right side looks ; we can only
weave and wait.'

ON PROCRASTINATION.

‘ Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give ; when thou hast it by thee.’—PROV. iii. 28.

THE spirit of this exhortation is that we should not needlessly keep our neighbour in any distress, or put him to any inconvenience ; should not allow him to remain under any burden of anxiety or suspense from which we might release him ; should be careful to avoid making things unnecessarily hard or troublesome for another by our action or neglect of action. And the world is so full of various heartache every day from morn to eve ; there is so much to be borne of evil or unpleasantness in most men’s lots, that it is worth studying to learn and practise this lesson ; to be considerate, to spare aught of vexation when we can.

We are compelled sometimes to cause vexation when we fain would not, and lament the

compulsion, and may be causing it now and again quite unconsciously when, could we have surmised the effect, we should certainly have refrained from doing as we did. But it is caused by us often from culpable thoughtlessness, from selfish inattentiveness to others' needs and feelings, for want of that readiness to put ourselves mentally in their place, that sympathetic perception or imagination which would have sufficed to prevent it; when we might have done differently, and should have done, to some soothing instead of wounding, or relief instead of annoyance, had we only been kinder in heart, and gifted with the understanding and discernment which kindness begets. There are troubles witnessed by us which we can do nothing, desire as we may, to remove or lessen; but there are troubles, too, of people about us which we could easily have averted or lightened with a word that was not spoken, with a ministry of which we were capable and failed to render, or to the weight of which we added with some unreflecting carelessness or heedless touch of ours.

If, from among the multitudinous afflictions suffered by mortals, all those secret pangs and frets and chafings were gathered out and made

to pass before us which we might have saved one another with a little more mutual delicate observance or timely responsiveness in social commerce and intercourse, it would form a long and melancholy procession. And from a lack of *promptness* in answering, as eventually, perhaps, we do answer, what misery or discomfort is often endured that need never have been endured. We delay to do what we are asked to do, lightly leaving it till to-morrow, and with our delay lengthen out for another moments of gloom that might have been shortened. While we tarry, the darkness for him is needlessly prolonged.

It is a great thing to be prompt with the benefaction solicited of us, and which we are inclined to bestow, and not subject the suitor to the weariness of waiting for it, plagued by uncertainty, tossed disturbingly between hope and fear. He gives twice who gives quickly. It was nothing to you that you loitered over it, and put it off for a day or two, but it meant much for him who remained with his want unsupplied, much, perchance, of sadness or disease. Was it nothing that you could so much sooner have set an anxious heart at rest, or brightened with a gleam of sunshine a clouded life, had you chosen? A gift, moreover, has

often lost for the recipient half its value or sweetness when it has come so tardily, when there has been evidently such long deliberation and hesitancy about it, that though granted—amply granted at last, maybe—no glow of warm soul is felt in it; or when only after repeated pleading and appeal is it obtained, wrung from a reluctant hand.

From some men mercy or help flows swiftly; their sensibility is always ready, always close by the door when you knock. But in some it lies behind, and has to be laboured for and sought out; they must always be argued with and entreated and pressed a good deal before they flow, or response lags, perhaps—their response to what is demanded of them—from slowness of mind, from native inability to apprehend or appreciate rapidly. They are not deficient in right feeling or impressionableness, but it takes time for them to receive an impression, as with those who are slow to see a joke, or to catch the humorous point of a story, and only begin to laugh some while after the story is finished, or like the old rustic by the wayside whom the question, to which he seems to listen attentively, does not penetrate at once, and whose reply to it is not evolved without a tedious interval of silent staring. ‘Would,’ we

have said, 'that they could have answered the call, or claim of the hour, more expeditiously; that they could have been readier with the answer which they ultimately gave!'

And have we not felt often the unsatisfactoriness of sympathy delayed; that it would have been so much more welcome and precious had it been earlier expressed? You had desired and hoped for it, perhaps in vain, had relied on having it, and were sorely disappointed; and then when you had learned, maybe, to do without it, had adjusted yourself to the privation, it came. Ah, what it might have done for you earlier which now it does not! There is sympathy delayed for struggling souls who, during their hard and weary struggle, would have given anything for it; delayed until they have begun to conquer or to emerge from the baffling wood into clearer space, while on their lonely path friends have begun to congregate; and then, when scarcely needed, it has been plentifully accorded, with the intimation, perhaps, that it had been throbbing all the while, you know, in secret, though not displayed; like a certain nobleman's deferred warm patronage of Dr. Johnson, deferred until the latter had triumphed over his difficulties unaided, and had accomplished his important

work ; of whom the great lexicographer scornfully said : ‘ Now that I have made a voyage round the world of the English language, and am sailing into port with fair winds and on a smooth sea, my Lord Chesterfield sends his little cock-boat to tow me in.’

There are persons—are we not acquainted with them?—whose rule it is to withhold any open sympathy with a worthy cause or movement in its first feeble, doubtful, battling days, though inclined to sympathize with it, until signs of its succeeding are discerned, and its march has grown somewhat strong ; who cannot afford to cast in their lot with it while it is unpopular or obscure, but are profusely cordial when once it has begun to make way.

Now, whenever you are visited with an impulse to minister aught, be prompt to follow the impulse. Do not linger to offer that bit of help, or to speak that succouring, encouraging word which your mind suggests. Do not linger to write that letter of condolence, of consolation, saying to yourself as you meditate taking up the pen that to-morrow will be time enough. Do it at the moment when the impulse is upon you. And have you not noticed often that in putting it off you have put it out of your heart, and that when to-

morrow comes that which you had contemplated and left till then is not done at all? The good thought not straightway acted on has gone from you. It would not wait for your waiting, and you have lost an opportunity of exercising yourself and blessing another with some sweet service rendered. On second thought you refrained, you said; but the first thought was the truest and best, the one that should have been followed.

Some things are better put off. It is better to decide on suspending them for awhile, just because we are thus saved from doing them. Had they not been put off, we should have done them to our subsequent sorrow and regret. That instead of hastening to carry out some idea of utterance or action, we delayed, and having slept upon it, found ourselves in the morning dispossessed of the idea—*that*, has been now and again our salvation—a salvation for which we were thankful. And the mischief that would have been escaped, the pain that others would have been spared, if we had but tarried at times, when we were quick to say or do, if we had only been less ready to flow with the impulse of the moment. Put off by all means giving expression to the hot resentment that flames within you, or pouring

out as you are tempted all your bitter mind, or discharging the caustic, venomous word at the back of your tongue, or answering a fool according to his folly. But do not procrastinate with any good or kindness which you may have in your present thought and power to confer. If at all disposed to help another in his need, be very swift about it, get rid at once of what you have "by you" for ministry.

But in relation to other matters than giving, some men are always waiting for to-morrow. Their principal activity consists in forming and cherishing good intentions for to-morrow, in laying upon it heavy burdens of effort and enterprise, none of which, perhaps, are ever touched with one of their fingers. It is always with them, you will notice, what they mean to do *after to-day*. If their performance in the present be poor and meagre, their plans and resolves for the future are admirable. They are busy projectors of excellent courses which, for the most part, remain untrodden; like Coleridge, who occupied himself much in projecting great literary works, which he never executed or attempted. Such persons live often in something of a 'fool's paradise' with regard to their ability, fancying that they are

capable of what they are not, because ever designing grandly without ever essaying to accomplish. Designing grandly without ever testing their power in essaying to accomplish, they are deceived with a delusion of power possessed which is not theirs. The works of which they dream and dream, and never set about seeking to prosecute, seem in the dreaming to be their own, while yet in all probability they are quite unequal to them, and spend their days flattered with a false estimate of themselves. It is only as we bend down to do the fine thing devised that we know truly what we are.

Then there is the temptation, the disposition so often felt and yielded to, to postpone till to-morrow what is difficult or disagreeable that has to be done—some arduous task or duty from which we shrink. It must e'en be undertaken sooner or later; but let us leave it anyhow, we think, till to-morrow, and then resolutely apply ourselves to it—than which nothing is more foolish. This is always best done directly, even though it need not be directly done, since it will be not only just as difficult or disagreeable another day, but more so. Our avoidance of the hard for the mere sake of present ease will have left us somewhat

weaker for it, not braced, but relaxed. Doing it to-morrow looks to us, from where we stand, easier than doing it to-day. But it will not be, for to-morrow when it comes will be to-day, and to-day, with ourselves, moreover, a little feebler than now, through our self-indulgent choice and surrender. Always remember that the morrow, to which you are tempted to defer an arduous and unwelcome task or duty, will be itself to-day when it arrives, and that to defer grappling with the task or duty is to ensure your finding it clothed in a severer aspect, with its difficulty for you increased rather than diminished. Oh the things we have done in imagination to-morrow, with such facility, so lightly and cheerfully, which to-morrow and to-morrow have passed away without seeing done, but further off from being done than ever. Whenever there is a hard task or duty claiming you, resist the seductive suggestion to let it stand over till to-morrow, nor let the sun go down upon your tarrying.

Further, with what foolish anticipations men have often postponed correcting some fault, making some improvement in their conduct, or striving to break some recognised evil habit to which they were in bondage. Not just now, they have said. Under existing circumstances,

while we are situated as we are, the time is scarcely propitious, scarcely convenient. We must needs wait awhile before beginning, as later on we are quite determined to begin. To-morrow we shall be out yonder; it will no longer be to-day, with to-day's hindrances and adverse influences. Only let us get out yonder, away from these, and we shall do it; we are thoroughly resolved for to-morrow. And was the fault corrected, the improvement made, the habit wrestled with and broken through? No. The sky overhead might, indeed, be changed, as they had expected; but, unfortunately, they bore with them under it the same old mind unchanged; the old hampering feebleness and opposing propensities were still there. They had escaped from the former unfavourable circumstances into a new and more favourable set of circumstances; but they had not escaped from themselves, from their own irresoluteness and weakness, from the infirm and reluctant self in their breasts. The morrow's altered sky had not altered that, in consequence of which they found it just as difficult, just as impracticable to do better as it was before.

It, like the 'Kobold Thought,' of which Lowell sang, moved with them when their dwelling shifted,

‘Perched aloft

On the first load of household stuff it went ;

For where the mind goes, goes old furniture.’

He who says to truth and duty, ‘Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give thee the loyalty and surrender thou demandest,’ has ‘by him’ the while to give, if he would earnestly apply himself to the work. And to-morrow, whatever of outward difference it may bring, will provide him with no more. *Now*, for each, is ‘the accepted time’ in which, with due striving, he may begin to rise to higher things, and he who waits for the ampler help of a future time waits in vain, waits only to find the way harder, and the hill more steep. ‘O Lord, convert me,’ one of the old Christian fathers is recorded to have prayed before his conversion, morning and evening, ‘but not to-day, Lord—not to-day.’ And there are men who for years have been thinking and meaning to be converted, but always *some day after to-day*, looking on to some to-morrow that should witness the change in them, and which they have never reached, nor ever will ; since to-morrow is ‘a period nowhere to be found in all the hoary registers of time, nowhere, save in the fool’s calendar’ ; to the end of life it is *to-day*, always and only *to-day*, that is here. Faith in

what we shall do of the right at a more convenient season is one of the devil's deftest nurses, a nurse whose soft breasts suckle perdition. Ah, those lovely to-morrows, when the neglected duty is going to be embraced, when the nobler work is going to be wrought, and the lower aim forsaken for the higher, when we are going to be so much truer and better! How lovely they look descried in the distance! Yet they are only deluding mirages of the desert, not real green oases, toward which we are moving, for when to-morrow comes there is nought around us but the old treeless, waterless desert of to-day. 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it straightway with thy might.' 'Proroguing till to-morrow,' as one has quaintly said, 'is apt to be followed by dissolving for eternity.'

'Shun delays, they breed remorse ;
Take thy time while time is lent thee ;
Creeping snails have weakest force ;
Fly thy fault, lest thou repent thee ;
Good is best when soonest wrought,
Ling'ring labours come to naught.

'Time wears all his locks before ;
Take thou hold upon his forehead ;
When he flees, he turns no more,
And behind his scalp is naked ;
Works adjourned have many stays ;
Long demurs breed new delays.'

‘Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it straightway with thy might.’ Say not to the better impulse that solicits, to the conscience that wakes and presses, to the ideal that claims your devotion, and begins to move and stir your heart, ‘Go, and come again, and I will give you what you ask.’ Give without postponement. Give at once, as it is ‘by you’ to give, rather than be left confessing:

‘To-morrow, I cried, I will go to Christ,
For Tophet’s too hot to-day ;
But to-morrow came, and the Styx was iced,
And the devil there was to pay.
And all my good is in after, now,
And the present is always here ;
And I know how the voice of my present vow
Will sound in to-morrow’s ear ;
For to-morrow will ever a prospect be,
Unborn in the future’s womb,
Till I see it stand in God’s chancery,
My Judge, at the crack of doom.’

BEAUTY LOST AND FOUND.

‘ Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.’
—Ps. 1. 2.

THE Psalmist has a vision, in which he sees Jehovah summoning His people Israel to present themselves before Him upon the slopes of their sacred mountain, and hears Him reproaching them in tones of thunder for the empty hollow ritualism, for the mere outward and formal worship with which they had come to be satisfied, as though He, whose was every beast of the forest and the cattle upon a thousand hills, could be content to receive at their hands nought but the flesh of bulls and the blood of goats, in whatever abundance and with whatever regularity offered. The pious zeal of the young King Josiah, driving all idols from the land, sweeping away all idol groves and temples, had succeeded in relighting the altars and restoring the service of the House

of the Lord. Under him the apostate nation had been brought back to Zion, had returned with ardour to their ancient rites and sacrifices. Long neglect had given place to assiduous attention, the whole Divine ceremonial was once more established and faithfully carried out.

But gradually, though with no relaxation of strictness, it was no longer carried out with the same devotion of soul, but perfunctorily, mechanically, with scarce any of the inward homage and sensibility of which it had been the expression. Gradually this declined, the ceremonial, still maintained in every scrupulous detail, became a mere ceremony and nothing more, a body from which the glow and animation of the spirit had departed; and the evils of idolatry and indifference banished, were followed in the course of time by the evils of formality and hypocrisy. So it is constantly that what was begun from the heart is apt to be continued after awhile without heart, and the once living ordinance sinks to a dead custom, with all its original life withered, all its original meaning lost for us. So it is constantly that sacred forms, once warm with the fire of holy feeling, tend to grow cold, and are preserved and repeated without a throb

of the old feeling, no more signifying for us, though we retain them, what they had signified for us in the past, or for those, our forefathers, from whom we inherited them, and of whose emotion they had been the chosen or involuntary utterance.

Now, the religious spirit of our psalmist, a deeply religious man, was vexed and distressed by the undevotional devotions of his countrymen, by the wholly external worship that prevailed, and, brooding over it with sorrow, he beheld Jehovah descending from heaven to remonstrate with them on it, declaring that their punctual and perpetual oblations were of no value to Him, afforded Him not the smallest pleasure, except as they represented the oblation of loyal and adoring hearts. He saw the Almighty in his vision unsatisfied, unappeased with the daily, sumptuous ritual, the endless round of soulless observance; saw Him above it, clothed in tempestuous unrest, and only shining forth with answering beams of approval and blessing, as He could shine, and had shone at other times, out of 'the perfection of beauty.' In this purely outward and formal service of theirs He was not near them, was not effluent upon them; He was near and effluent, only out of the perfection of beauty—

and this was not beauty; however imposing and splendid the ceremonial, this was not the ideal of Zion, which made it a dwelling-place of the Most High and the seat of His manifestation.

The psalmists of Israel sang much and often of the beauty of Zion, extolling it in many a musical verse. To the spiritually-minded among them, however, its beauty lay, not in its physical features, nor in the majesty of the material structure that crowned the height in the tabernacle, with its choir and robed priests and rich furniture, but in the consecration to the Lord which the hill symbolized, as a spot set apart for His praise and for meditation upon His name, as the mountain of His holiness, as the city of the great King. Here was its beauty for them, that it meant and imaged consecration to the Lord — a consecration which it was ever calling upon the nation, in whose midst it stood, to aspire after and seek to realize in their own hearts and lives. Hence, when this was lost sight of, in their offerings there of the flesh of bulls and the blood of goats, when these were unaccompanied by any self-giving and self-surrender on the part of the offerers, when they themselves were not the Lord's in enthusiasm for His law and

righteousness, in desire and effort to be conformed to His will, then the real beauty of the mount and its solemn order and appointments was gone, the grace of the fashion of it had vanished; and the motive, it seems to me, of the psalm before us is the writer's lament that Zion, in having become the scene of a mere perfunctory, mechanical worship, inspired by no consecration of soul, had fallen from its loveliness, was no longer 'the perfection of beauty' out of which God had shone.

Ah! the beauty which things have lost for us often that once were full of beauty; religious forms, for instance, when they have ceased to embody, as they once did, our religious sentiments and emotions; ideals, because we have outgrown them, and found them illusions, or else because we have grown unfaithful to them, have neglected and turned aside from their beckoning, until they were powerless to charm and draw us. Or pleasures, because our pursuit of them has been too hot and unrestrained, because we have indulged in them with foolish immoderation, spoiling them thus for ourselves like a child's gathered wild-flowers under the too tight pressure of his warm hand; or because a certain coarseness and worldliness contracted by us has ruined our taste for these

simple pleasures, and left us unable to enjoy them as in earlier years. Our admired heroes, again, and demi-gods, in whom we have gradually detected ugly flaws, with whom our own progress has gradually disenchanted us, whose fine gold has been revealed to us as tinsel.

It is sad when some things lose their beauty for us, when there is less of beauty visible to us in the world, in human life, in 'mountains, and all hills, in fruitful trees and all cedars,' than we used to find.

But our Psalmist, speaking of God having shone forth as He did not now, reminds one of beauty existing around us in which He remains hidden, from which He does not flow upon and minister to us, does not stir or touch us. How much beauty there is out of which, for many whom it surrounds, He does not shine; sometimes, perhaps, because they are debarred from proper access to it. There it is, plentifully about them in pictures, and works of art which they have no sufficient opportunity of viewing; in country scenes, in woods and vales and streaming waters, from visits to which they are excluded by hard circumstances. Would that they could only be brought in contact with these! What latent susceptibilities it might evoke, what sealed

fountains of feeling open; the refining influence it might exert on them! And it is good and promising to note the increasing solicitude shown in our day, and the efforts made to afford such some acquaintance with them, as in the Sunday opening, for the toiling multitude, of museums and picture-galleries, and the promotion of holiday excursions to rural regions for those who spend their days cooped up in city slums.

For thousands, again, God sleeps in beauty that is profusely spread before them, because they are not quickened to discern; their interior vision is not yet awake or is not sufficiently cultured; they see without perceiving—see the cool, moist primrose in the spring, and it is but a yellow primrose and no more; see the floweret in the vale, and it stirs in them no thoughts that lie too deep for tears. The soul in them is too dull and dead. And, with ourselves, to what beauty we are blinded often, or rendered deaf to its appeal, through some passing pressure upon us of sorrow and care, through some dark or low mood into which we have foolishly slidden, through some temporary mental condition that might have been avoided, or disordering of mind with agitations or anxieties needlessly incurred. We give away

thus, often, our impressionableness, and miss the angel at our door.

Much is lost, too, in the case of many—and I wish to mark this especially—through an unduly critical temper, because they start always in looking at aught with a disposition to criticize rather than admire, and are so intent on any blemish or defect apparent that they have no eye for what there is of the comeliness to please or grace to charm. Their impulse is habitually, in every examination, to examine for a possible fault, never for a possible feature to delight in or approve. And what they seek they find, while the unsought eludes them. Beware of such a spirit ; it condemns to self-exclusion from many a shining forth of the Lord.

Again, there is beauty in which He is hidden often, simply because we are so busily occupied, so actively dispersed abroad, or because we are too abundantly supplied. Circumstances occur to make us idle for a time and compel us to sit still. Our hands are folded in enforced leisure, our world is narrowed perchance to the confinement of the sick-room, and then the loveliness of some things is perceived by us as it had not been. We learn to notice with pleasure little things

that we had not noticed, or noticing before, had derived no gratification from. We see more than we had ever seen, in the familiar view from the window, of meadow and sky; we take ever so much more delight in the flowers brought in from the garden, in the play of sunlight on wall or floor, in the notes of the bird that sings outside. I have often been struck with the dainty sensibility and enjoyment in this way of bedridden or invalid folk. And have we not said to ourselves sometimes, when carried for a season from the broad bustling river into a quiet backwater of life and kept shut up there, 'Why, how much we have been overlooking of what there is to wonder at and admire, while we were toiling in rowing!' Or, is it not the case that beauty is often hidden from us through our possessing profusely; that much of exquisiteness escapes us just because we have too many exquisite things, too many pictures on our wall, or articles of virtue around us? Yes, we suffer deprivation from the number of these; with fewer we should be likely to discern and appreciate more. We cannot see all the grace of the individual trees for the multitude. A little thinning of the wood would contribute to reveal it. Our rejoicing would not seldom be finer were we only surrounded with less to enjoy.

But now it is out of beauty that God has shone. Here, in other words, is Divine utility, and more, often, than in what we call the useful. I do not care much, cries one, for the beautiful unless it be useful ; but the beautiful is always Divinely useful. Mere ornament, mere decoration, you say. Yet observe how profusely Mother Nature has evolved mere ornament and decoration. How lavishly she paints and bedecks with flowers of an endless variety of shape and hue the very ground beneath our feet. In the words of a writer, 'we live in a world in which the wing of the ephemeral butterfly is gaily embellished, and black clouds wear the tint of the rainbow, and birds are red or blue or spotted ; where the fields are carpeted with prodigal emerald, and green foliage breaks into variegated blossom, and sends forth a hundred perfumes ; where the dewdrops sparkle like diamonds, and the lily stems are graceful, and the vines are festoons, and the trees make Gothic arches with their branches, and the wind diversified music in the grove temple.' Yes, Nature lavishly paints and bedecks, as though that alone were a sufficient end. She is full of taste ; she goes in to make herself charming, and has determined from the beginning that the survival of the fittest in

her domain shall be the survival of the fittest to please; that the beautiful and the most beautiful shall somehow be perpetuated; while in us men and women she has wrought an instinct to seek ornament and decoration, an instinct for forms and odours and sweet sounds. And should we not lose much, much auxiliary to our very best and highest life, if all were excluded from our midst, the only justification of which is that it is so lovely or pretty?—if there were only erudite scientists and no visionary poets, only engineers and no artists, only convenient houses and no architecture, only wise speech and no wordless music, only paved roads and no flowery meads, only books of information and no uninstrucive songs, only substantial facts and no airy sentiments? Oh, it is just beauty and no more which again and again has saved us, putting us into a finer mood, giving us inspiration, sweetening us to our healthening, soothing us to our increase in vigour.

Have we not been more deeply, subtly benefited often in looking at a picture than in hearing a sermon, in strolling through a summer wood than in listening to a botanical discourse? Has not God drawn nearer to us at times and spoken with us more intimately

or healingly in a wonderful sunset than in any words of the preacher? What redemption has begun for many an one, with his first dim awakening to some sense of the beautiful; and how much we owe to-day to beauty that has come down to us from the so-called dark ages, in many a hoar cathedral, with its fretted aisles and windows richly dight! Not without some Divine effect and ministry for us did they live and labour who gave themselves of old to carve and adorn elaborately.

‘The hand that rounded Peter’s dome,
And groined the aisles of Christian Rome,
Wrought in a sad sincerity.
Himself from God he could not free.
He builded better than he knew,
The conscious stone to beauty grew.
Know’st thou what wove yon woodbird’s nest
Of leaves and feathers from her breast?
Or how the fish outburst its shell,
Painting with morn each annual cell?
Or how the sacred pine-tree adds
To her old leaves new myriads?
Such, and so grew these holy piles,
While love and terror laid the tiles.
O’er England’s abbeys bends the sky,
As on its friends with kindred eye;
For out of thought’s interior sphere
These wonders rose to upper air.
And Nature gladly gave them place,
Adopted them into her race,
And granted them an equal date
With Andes and with Ararat.’

Yes, out of beauty God has shone. We are Divinely taught not by teaching alone, are Divinely served not by the useful alone. Beauty is one of the channels and vehicles through which spiritual influences are conveyed, and to be alive to it is to be further quickened. 'Beautiful things,' wrote Thomas Lynch, 'are suggestive always of a purer and higher life, and fill us with a mingled, chastening love and fear. They have a graciousness that wins us, an excellence to which we involuntarily do reverence. If you are poor, yet modestly aspiring, keep a vase of flowers upon your table; they will assist to maintain your dignity, and to promote in you considerateness and delicacy of behaviour.'

But 'Out of the perfection of beauty,' sang the Psalmist; and was there really *perfection* in Zion? Was it really so superb as they thought it to be and represented it in their songs? No, not at all; it was very imperfect always, at the best. But they *saw* it as perfect, clothing it in their fancy, to their affection, with more than belonged to it, idealizing it to perfection; and out of Zion thus idealized by them God shone upon them inspiringly, enrichingly; for in our idealizings of the actual we receive Divinely, are Divinely helped and nourished.

It is not so beautiful often as it seems to us, but we are the better again and again for the seeming, the better for the freest idealizing of the friend whom we love, of the hero to whom we look up, of the king upon his throne, of the sainted dead whom we remember. Something of ethereal blessing and gain flows to us, falls on us therefrom. How much poorer we should be than we are, and less strong, were it not for the light glimpsed by us here and there which never was on sea or land !

Or, perhaps, our Psalmist meant, not that Zion was perfect in beauty, or had ever been, but that out of her beauty, such as it was, there shone a God who was the perfection of beauty; that it signified and declared the existence of such an One, was the token and reflection here on earth of Him above and beyond. And what means, I would ask, all the manifold beauty of the world, beauty not only in flowers that have painted themselves so gorgeously to attract insects, or in the plumage of birds acquired for the winning of mates, but beauty also in the mysteriously exquisite forms of crystals, in mountains and glens and forests, in billowy seas and midnight skies, in sunrises and sunsets, and in the laboured works and the yearning dreams of men? Can it be that the

doctrine of the survival of the fittest, through the operation of natural selection, is a sufficient explanation of the whole? Are we not compelled to assume behind and through all a determining idea, some living fountain and fulness of beauty, seeking to issue forth and express Itself; some nameless One, helplessly named by us God, who as the reason and secret of all, transcends all, and *is* ever that more perfect, of which, amidst the perfectest beheld, we dream and dream? Must we not believe that the wondrous beauty which the universe contains at once hides and reveals a perfection of beauty, as its source and shaping power; saying with Emerson in our contemplation, whether of Nature's evolutions or man's productions and achievements:

‘ The passive master lent his hand
To the vast soul that o’er him planned.

A WHIT-SUNDAY MEDITATION.

‘Quench not the Spirit.’—I THESS. v. 19.

‘**R**ECEIVE ye the Holy Ghost,’ Jesus is represented as having once said to His Apostles, while He performed the act of breathing on them, the act having been symbolic, doubtless, in His intention, of some real conveyance from Himself, which with the accompanying word He invited them to admit and appropriate; as though He had said: ‘Am I not imparting in my daily converse with you? Be receptive of what I impart, open your doors to my inflow, embrace and absorb the gift communicated by Me.’ He breathed on them, to denote pictorially that He *was* and *had* been breathing into them; for had they not stirring in them and wandering through them, as the result of His intercourse with them, new motions of thought and feeling, new mental impressions and heart-pulsings? He knew

that they had, and they themselves were sensible of it. Let them, then, just entertain and cherish these. That was what He wanted them to do. That was what they required to do in order to their Apostolic perfecting—to receive the Holy Ghost which they had of Him. It was not something outside and far off which they needed to pursue and gather in, but something very nigh and already in them, which they needed only to take possession of. Should they fail to become the men of greater vision and power which He desired and meant them to become, it would be from failing to preserve and foster elements in their own breast which He, with His teaching and influence, had started there; because, instead of nursing, they had neglected these, instead of granting them free play, had allowed them to be checked and stifled. Do but receive, He says, the Holy Ghost which I am breathing and have breathed, and all will be fulfilled.

And, again and again, there lurks in ourselves the while, the benediction that is set before us, or the brighter fortune, the fuller, richer life of which we dream with sighs of longing. Again and again the Divine boon for which we cry, and mourn our destitution of, has begun to be bestowed upon us, and our

longing, did we know, is the sign of its bestowal. For 'thou wouldst not be seeking me,' it declares in the words of Paschal, 'hadst thou not found me, therefore trouble not thyself.'

But we are so frequently less than we might be, less advanced and enlarged, missing attainment, lingering below heights that might have been reached, for lack of *laying hold* on what lies within us. So often the Spirit moves within us in vain, flutters wistfully, and is left untended or unattended to, meets with no welcome or encouragement, but the reverse; has no room made for it, but is wantonly cramped or crowded out. Wiser and better thoughts visit us like angels with treasure under their wings, to which we decline to give heed, which we are not courageous enough, perhaps, to accept, or at which we glance for a moment half disposed to accept them, and then turn from them to be swayed and ruled by others. We are inspired from on high and do not recognise it, or dare not believe it. The inspiration is mistrusted and set at nought, in servile deference, maybe, to some convention or routine. Overawed by prevailing opinion, by established usages or dogmas, the individual soul is withheld from listening

to its own whispers, with due loyalty, with due respect and reverence, and thus its own natural growth is hindered, what it enfolds of worth is kept from unfolding, what it is constituted to contribute to the world, the world loses; as when an apple-orchard is prevented, by grafting, from bearing a single apple after its kind, and its sap is all diverted to nourish grafts of alien fruit. Many a man of whom we least suspect it has flashes of intuition, of true discernment, which, instead of becoming productive, are wasted, and lead to nothing, because he is either too timid or too indolent to follow them. People exclaim sometimes on hearing a novel conception uttered by one who enjoys the repute of superior wisdom or whose name and fame carry authority, 'Why, that is the very idea which we ourselves have had in secret, and which has once and again suggested itself to our minds.' But, then, in their minds it had been doubted and flouted; *there*, they were suspicious of it, afraid of it, and had let it go as too opposed to prevalent ideas to be harboured. Not until it came to them from abroad, from the lips of acknowledged wisdom and authority, were they able to feel it worth considering, or quite proper and safe to entertain. Be ready to hearken fear-

lessly when your soul speaks, undeterred by the absence of confirmation from without. Learn to look for, and detect, and watch the Divine gleam in your private breast. Lend an ear to your honest thought when it rises, however lonely it may be, and courageously accord it freedom from unnecessary hamperings and restraints, lest any inbreathing of the Lord should be suppressed and lost. Gain, untold gain, would accrue to us all were each more willing to be receptive of himself; for 'There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding.'

Then, again, what mean our recurring lamented succumbings in moments of temptation, our halting, faltering progress in virtue, but that we are not receiving the Holy Ghost which is in us, have not surrendered to promptings and appeals of the higher nature, have permitted the tides of higher impulse and emotion to ebb away without resigning ourselves to be borne along by them, without taking advantage of them? Behind our worst doing, our poorest behaviour, how much there has been often of noble impulse and emotion that needed only to have been detained and cherished to ensure far other doing and behaviour! How infinitely better we have been

in mind and heart than we appeared in action ! Judging from the secrets of one's own inner life—and one can only thus judge—one cannot help thinking, while looking at all the evil done daily under the sun, of the daily throbs and potencies of good beneath it, that are ever failing to issue in aught, that have existed only to expire barren of result ; of the amount of moral sensibility and moral impression from which no corresponding conduct flows, like those fifty seeds in Nature of which she brings but one to bear. If all this, or only half of this, were fertile, if men did but move always in conformity with their best thoughts and feelings, what a different place the world would be ! For myself, I should be quite content to live according to the occasional aspirings and inclinings of which the breast of the most erring and ill-conducted of mortals is the scene. There is so much in us all that is better than we show, so much Holy Ghost that never breaks forth upon us. It is denied expression, it lies imprisoned, we will not let it have its way. Here, for instance, is a piece of work, a wretchedly imperfect and slovenly piece of work. But, the beautiful aspirations and resolutions with which it was begun, the noble ideal of performance that filled the vision and

received the homage of the soul, and the beautiful momentary reawakenings, to the claim and charm of that neglected ideal, the passing agitations of discontent and compunction experienced now and again in the course of the work. Good heavens! in contradiction and in spite of what good in the man has the bad work been wrought!

When St. Paul exhorts the Thessalonians not to quench the Spirit, he was referring probably to certain remarkable exaltations of mind and heart of which the Christians of the Apostolic age would appear to have been the subjects, when at times they were strangely lifted and carried out of themselves in a kind of ecstasy of love and joy, that gave them while it lasted new faculties, as it were, new tongues of utterance. These exaltations came upon them unsought and unexpected. They were not reached by endeavour, but given them, could not be brought on as might be desired, but seized them. It was not a frame which with effort they induced in themselves, but a frame that swept over them. Yet while entirely independent of any planning or willing of theirs, St. Paul intimates, you observe, that it was capable of being frustrated or arrested by them, that the flame which they could not

possibly kindle they might be the means of extinguishing, and were able and should study to avoid that. And the soul has its occasional elevated moods when we are so much better than our ordinary selves, its occasional more vivid impressions, and flashes of Divine insight or conviction which we cannot command at all, which are not to be overtaken by any pursuing, yet which we may so act as to lose the benefit of, and render void and nugatory, or so set as to prevent their recurring. 'Now and then,' as one has said, 'something touches the dull dream of sense and custom, and all is changed; the Spirit bears its witness within us; Divine realities come up from the past and straightway enter the present. The ear into which we had poured our prayer is no longer deaf; the Infinite eye to which we had turned is no longer blind, but looks in upon us with answering glance. The mystery of life and the grievousness of death are gone. We know the little from the great, the transient from the eternal. We can possess our souls in patience, and neither any palms and scattered flowers of triumph can elate us, nor the weight of any cross appear too hard to bear.' No earnest nature is quite a stranger to such intermittent high moments. And we do not climb to them

with pains and plodding steps from below; they descend upon us; we are powerless to summon them; they visit us; nor can we account for them so as to know how to secure or promote their return. We know only that we are capable of experiencing such moments. But that which lies in our power and devolves upon us is to save them from being unfruitful, by surrendering to their influence, by making the most of them for action, as your poet does when the afflatus falls upon him, and dreams and fancies rush in like the morning wind; hastening to embody and preserve them in the form of song.

Or, has it not been without our seeking that we have been awakened as from sleep to a trouble of self-dissatisfaction or a constraining sense of duty? An impulse or aspiration which we had not felt has suddenly risen in us. It was owing, may be, to some incident or chance encounter by the way, with the bringing about of which we had nothing to do. We just happened to meet a particular person, or a trifle recalled some forgotten scene, or a sentence in some book caught our eye, and new strange feelings were called forth within us; a flood of new emotion poured through us, new sympathies seemed to be excited, we saw our-

selves in a new light, and resolved to go in pursuit of higher things. Here was an embryo of worthier action and worthier being formed for us, but it remained with us whether it should be developed or destroyed; we had no hand in originating it, but it lay in our hand to smother it if we chose, and perhaps we did, choking the breath that bloweth where it listeth. Yes, ever and anon, as we creep along earth-bent and cleaving to the dust, behold a door open in heaven, and a voice crying, 'Come up hither.' Many such opportunities are given to men, opportunities which they had not earned or created. And, alas! for the frequency with which they are thrown away or suffered to pass unimproved.

But, further, there are thoughts foolish or false, despondent or disparaging, with the indulgence of which we are apt sometimes to quench the Spirit in us, to stay and fling back a rising wave of noble passion or enthusiasm, and hinder the effluence of power—power for achievement or service, latent and waiting within. For example, we are moved under some excitement to expend strength, to do and dare for some good cause, to co-operate in some great or generous enterprise. That is our impulse, the direction in which we feel ourselves drawn and

urged ; when the thought suggests itself, 'What chance of success is there? How much, after all, is likely to be accomplished? Will our individual sympathy and participation with it really contribute anything, or have any real effect?' And we begin, perhaps, to draw back our hand ; we decide, perhaps, not to do as we had been led to think of doing, and the spirit subsides and dies in us—the fine spirit, for lack of following whose promptings, and pressing on as it pointed, much may be missed, more of various good than we dream ; the cherishing and expression of which would surely have been worth something—worth a good deal both for ourselves and society, even though little or nothing had been gained by it of that which we contemplated ; for it is not merely what you actually achieve which is of worth for yourself and others, but the glow and consecration of your attempt, the breath you breathe out in trying ; and when your aid may not be actually wanted, your will and effort to aid, *is*. The heroic courage and ardour and devotion that are often spent to no purpose, so far as the object aimed at is concerned, are never wasted ; and the world could ill afford to have been deprived of their beauty and the virtue that imperceptibly went forth from them.

It is better when moved to work toward an end confessedly good to have obeyed the inward motion, without ever attaining the end, than to have checked and stopped it with the question, 'What would be the use of essaying?' for rare and sweet, if unobserved and untraceable, is the efficacy of many a futile essay.

Again, we have within us the power and the will, say, to do well, to perform excellently, and here is the sphere of action assigned us, the work laid upon us; but we are tempted to depreciate and despise it rather, to regard it as insignificant and wanting in due dignity or importance. It is poor, paltry work to be engaged in, we think, and not necessarily because we are conceited and fancy ourselves fitted for something higher; we do not fancy thus at all perhaps, still, the work *is* poor and paltry in our eyes, it receives from us no homage or reverence, but the reverse. And so we quench the Spirit, so the best application and zeal and energy of which we are capable are prevented, and our execution becomes careless and slovenly; there is no warmth or vigour about it; the strength and animation we could have displayed are lost; for the work on which we look down is never finely done. Refuse, then, to think meanly of your allotted task, whatever

it may be, that it may be done most worthily and perfectly, in the very fulness of the spirit that sleeps in you. Let it be rather magnified in your thought ; determine to consider it great, as indeed you may legitimately, whatever it be ; for aught that a man is called to do is great by virtue of his being called to do it, and they who have filled their post most creditably are those always who have esteemed it highly. It has been their sense of its consequence or sacredness which has helped to clothe them with such might and devotion in relation to it. Had they regarded it more lightly and slightly, they would not have filled it as they did. In the importance which earnest souls have attached to their particular work, there may have been generally a measure of illusion. It was not half so important, perhaps, as they felt it to be. Nevertheless, the illusion has served to inspire and stimulate them, and has enabled them to accomplish more, and more excellently than they would have accomplished without it. Nothing is more weakening and relaxing, or more conducive to faltering and faulty performance, than a low, contemptuous estimate of the occupation to which we are bound. What is it that you have to do from day to day ? Whether it be to nurse a child,

to keep shop, or keep accounts, or, like me, to preach Sunday after Sunday to a small handful of people, do not despise it. Feel the dignity of it; say to yourself, as often as you set your hand to it, 'This that I have to do is a great thing, because I have to do it,' and you shall learn to do it greatly.

In conclusion, let us understand this one thing; that in the Apostolic counsel, 'Quench not the Spirit,' we have the secret really of our sure development toward perfection; the answer to the question, What shall we *do* to promote and ensure it? For what is needed really, is not so much to do anything, as to refrain from hindering what is being done in us, to avoid standing in the way of that, and allow that free scope and course—not so much to become, with labour, what we are not, as, with resignation, to permit and encourage what we are to become—to suffer and assist it to fulfil itself, instead of opposing or impeding it. Here, in our flesh, breathes ever something of Holy Ghost; let it have its way and prevail. We comprise ever a greater than ourselves; let it emerge and suffuse us. Only consent to be occupied by the higher that hides in you, to be overcome by the higher that struggles in you, just yield to it, cease withstanding and jarring

against it, and it shall gradually mould and transfigure you all round; 'the Divine Spirit would be constantly manifested in the midst of your human limitations, and some Divine thought or feature would be expressed through the perennial activity of your human life.' Our development towards perfection tarries, simply because we are obstructive of Him who inhabits us, are not surrendered to receive and careful to entertain Him, or because with our self-will and self-seeking we thrust ourselves obtrusively in His path. Get you out of the way, with your self-seeking and self-will, that He may flow through and overflow you, and the Son of God, which you are in secret, appear; according to the voice that Abu Yezid heard saying to him, amidst his vain yearnings and strivings: 'Thy thou is still with thee; if thou wilt attend unto *Me*, quit thyself and come.'

HOSPITAL SUNDAY.

‘ Be not forgetful to entertain strangers : for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.’—HEB. xiii. 2.

REMEMBERING that a generous readiness to afford food and shelter and all needful kindness to unknown wayfarers was one of the special virtues of the East, we may be rather surprised that the apostle should have felt it necessary to write thus to the Hebrew Christians. But reading the text in connection with the words immediately preceding, it looks as though he had seen some reason to fear lest the newly-acquired grace of love for the brethren, for those with whom they were united in the fellowship of the household of faith, should tend to impair the old inherited grace of benevolence to strangers; lest in the becoming warmth of their attachment to fellow-believers their proper flow towards such should be restrained; so that

while expressing his desire for the maintenance of that, he would e'en admonish them at the same moment not to fail or decrease in this.

He had no fault to find with their peculiar distinguishing affection for the followers of Jesus. No; it was beautiful, and he hoped would never decline. 'Let it continue,' he says; but hastens to add, Yet do not allow it to check or abate, in the least, the welcome you have always been prepared to accord to stray passers-by, or sojourners from a distance, concerning whose creed and sentiments you were doubtful or ignorant; do not be less genial and gracious to these because you have learned to love 'the brethren.' For, indeed, we are very apt often to be narrowed, in a measure, by concentration, to fall short in one direction through abounding in another. Often, alas! is some prejudice, exclusiveness or hardness apt to be begotten of what may be called fine religious ardour.

The Apostle, you observe, enforces his exhortation to the Hebrew Christians with a tacit allusion to the ancient story of Abraham and Lot, both of whom in opening their door to callers of whom they knew nothing, presently discovered that they had given admission to angels. It seems rather strange, rather

sad, does it not? that what, in the rude infancy of the world, the two patriarchs had done, with no thought of possible advantage to themselves, but spontaneously from the natural impulse of their heart, should have required to be enjoined upon their descendants in a later and more advanced age of the world, by reminding them of their forefather's gain from it, and that, apparently, in consequence of their elevation above the latter in spiritual affection and sympathy. Anyhow, they are urged not to neglect hospitality to any who might come in their way, on the ground of the recompensing quality that might be hidden in them; on the ground suggested by the reported experience of Abraham and Lot, that they could never tell what recompensing worth and excellence might not be found in entertaining them.

Most true it is, at all events, that men are revealed to us, and only revealed to us at their best, in what they comprise of worth and excellence, as we 'entertain' them; that to enjoy them fully we must greet, and grant to them liberally. They are often treasures veiled and concealed from us just because we do not harbour them duly, do not put them at their ease, or render them the requisite attention,

consideration, courtesy, generosity—are not ready to *be* something to them. The lack that we find in them, and of which we complain, is the result, perhaps, of some constraint or niggardliness on our part, in our attitude or expression. If they are so dull, it is that we have not shone on them; or so cold, it is that we have not embraced them. We should meet, doubtless, in many with a fine honour of which there may be little sign, did they but meet in us a more magnanimous trust or encouraging confidence. We are too suspicious and unbelieving with regard to them to elicit it. You never sound all the sweetness or richness of another; never know how charming and attractive he can be until you have begun to love him. That will bring to light often an angel in one who may have appeared anything but angelic before.

Rightly to estimate and appreciate another, you need to be more than a close observer of him: you need to open your arms to him and take him into the warmth of their enfolding. And much is frequently missed of various benefit to ourselves through our characteristic English reserve, our proud or shy reserve towards those with whom we happen to be thrown for a while; our inability or slowness

to unbend, to be sociable and interchange with them on the road. As again, by holding aloof too much from opportunities of intercourse with people who are not exactly of our line, you know, who don't belong to our set, whose ideas and beliefs, perhaps, are at variance with our own.

But I have chosen the text this morning with reference to Hospital Sunday, and as appropriate to the occasion. For to entertain strangers is to hospitalize. The original hospital or hospice was a house for the reception of pilgrims and travellers, in which any such, of whatever rank and from whatever quarter, were treated as guests; these houses becoming largely resorted to in process of time by the sick and infirm, until the lodging-place became to a great extent an asylum. And our English word *guest* is actually from the Gothic *gast*, a stranger; bearing witness to the ancient kindly habits which left impressed at length upon the word *stranger* the meaning which we attach to *guest*—namely, one who is entertained. Hence, the true host or hospitaler is he who entertains, not his friends or his neighbours, but strangers; which is just the case with our present London hospitals. They are not for patients of a particular class, for a few chosen

and selected from the rest, but for anybody who may need them, from far or near, from adjacent City slum, or distant suburb. They stand wide open with their drugs and chemicals, with their manifold scientific appliances, and their highest surgical and nutrical skill, at the disposal of all who may seek them. They are for you and for me if we choose, and would admit us within their walls to-morrow if wounded or disabled, indifferent to our station or quality, or to the amount we may give to the collection to-day. And according to the measure in which we contribute to their exchequer, we are helping with a long arm to entertain strangers. Strangers indeed! Ah, the forms of suffering strange to us which they are daily dealing with and relieving—complicated ghastly forms, of which in our lives from year's end to year's end we encounter no example, and of which we have little or no conception—curiosities and horrors of physical woe with which we are never brought into contact. What a revelation a walk through their wards would be to most of us, of un contemplated, unimagined bodily miseries and disorders and aches and pains! And there are being treated and comforted a multitude unknown; men and women and children with

whom we are unacquainted, drawn from the millions outside our individual circles. They enfold in their succouring arms people of all sorts and conditions from that huge metropolitan mass which we, in our several interests and activities, are but touching at a point or two here and there. Thus it is, by contributing to our hospitals and other kindred institutions, that we link ourselves on, as it were, to a great outlying world of human sorrow and anguish and pain, and assist in ministering to it, in acting on it remedially, reaching those whom directly we cannot reach.

From our several little places and spheres we connect ourselves with things and affairs abroad, with regions and events beyond us, by the reading of newspapers, and books of biography and travel; and are not content without doing this; we want to feel something of what is afar off, something of movements and phenomena that we see not, to feel something of 'the stir of the great Babel.' And, while sympathizing with stricken neighbours and friends, with cases of suffering that fall now and again under our observation and appeal to us at our doors, we connect ourselves, as it were, with the suffering of the world in contributing to such institutions as

our hospitals. Their recurring application to us for funds affords us the opportunity and means of overflowing our necessary bounds, and spreading ourselves helpfully and beneficently whither we are unable to go.

‘Be not forgetful,’ says the text; and as we pursue our quiet way, in our quiet homes and surroundings, with ever and anon a grief, a sickness, a calamity of our own to bear—or a distress, a tragedy close beside us which excites our compassion and occupies us with efforts to relieve—Hospital Sunday arrives, to remind us of the strangers, of the great army of sufferers unapproached and undescried, and invites us to draw near to these; and with the answer of our money, whether the sum be large or small, we may have the blessed sense of taking part in entertaining these, to have which sense is of great importance, quite irrespective of any service which our money may render, for nothing is more important to ourselves, for the fulness and the wholesomeness of our own being, than that we should be realizing at moments, as we cannot continually, the larger body of humanity to which we belong, the world beyond our personal, social, and domestic circles, and be set vibrating awhile to its ills and woes. Without something of this at intervals, we are left

wanting in ourselves, are not duly developed or filled out.

‘Life,’ as one has said, ‘alike in its highest and lowest forms, is the tendency of parts to unite in harmonious association, which tendency is felt by intelligent creatures as love toward their fellows’; hence he loves most, most truly and deeply, who is most extended in sympathetic association, and anything that helps to enlarge and widen the range of our sympathy by affording us glimpses of a greater human world than that with which we are familiar, and by bringing home to us its needs and sorrows, is life-giving and life-increasing.

But how wretched it is to think of all the multifarious suffering collected within the walls of our hospitals—to have our attention called to it, our minds disturbed with it! Yes, it is wretched always to contemplate the misery that exists—to be receiving it upon our feeling and entertaining it. Yet if, in entertaining strangers, some have entertained angels unawares, we, too, may be said to have been blessed, and blessed unawares, in having it to entertain.

There is an angelic side to the pain of being burdened by it. I do not know whether it has occurred to any of you, but it seems plain to

me that it has conduced greatly, for instance, to beget and nourish the idea of a good and merciful God, and that without it mankind would scarcely have risen to that idea. I do not say, of course, that the God idea is due to the presence and influence of suffering, but that to it is largely owing the gradually evolved idea of a God good and merciful—an almighty benevolence. Where now would have been the motherliness, the parental love, out of which, I suppose, all human virtue has grown, if our children were born to need from us no anxious watching, and tender guarding and self-sacrificing care—if there were no circumstances calling forth our solicitude, on account of which we have to be troubled about them, to keep weary night vigils by their beds, and expend ourselves often in soothing and comforting them? But for such circumstances men would never have known aught of the sweet meaning of fatherliness and motherliness. And, in the absence of suffering, how could we possibly have learned, as we have, sympathy, compassion, forbearance, gentleness? Is it not really under the pressure of encountered want, and weakness, and misery, and all around us that we designate evil, that these qualities have been developed in us? Their development

would have been impossible in a world in which no witnessed woes appealed to us, and no tears were shed. We must need have been vacant, then, of some of our finest sentiments and emotions. As Browning says :

‘ Type needs antitype, as day needs night ;
As shine needs shade, so good needs evil ;
How were pity understood unless by pain ?’

But now, mark ! Since it is only in answer to what we are that our God appears to us, since His image takes shape according to the height of ourselves, and we cannot imagine in Him aught of good, no elements of which are possessed by us, how but for our attainment to something of sympathy, and compassion, and forbearance, and gentleness, through contact with suffering, could we have attained to the conception of a good and merciful God ? No ; for the engendering and nurture of the conception we are indebted to what has been educed in us by the heavy hand of encompassing suffering. It required this night of darkness to bring out upon the sky overhead the light of eternal love ; except for it, the dread Power of which men are conscious would never have been thought or dreamt of as a loving Power. And, look you ! Is not it the fact that the Supreme Being has gradually become more

gracious, more just, more generous in the thought of believers than He had been, concurrently with their increasing sensibility to the weight of the world's miseries—that while they have been learning to feel these more deeply than their forefathers did, and to be more grieved and oppressed by them, they have been learning to behold Him divested of certain cruel and harsh features which their forefathers had imputed to Him? Such is the undoubted fact, that He has grown kinder to our view as our hearts have grown to be more alive to, and more burdened with, the miseries of the world.

But I know what is coming to your lips. Some will be hastening to object that it is these very miseries and the painful sense of their mighty sum which make it difficult for them to believe in God, and, indeed, perhaps compel them to doubt and deny Him; the abounding of evil, they say, excludes from us the idea of God. It does so with many, I allow; but let them consider a little more deeply. *Evil!* What is evil? It is that which we sigh and groan under, which displeases and revolts us, which we yearn to get rid of, and are moved to struggle against; it is our discontent, our feeling of wrongness and intoler-

ableness, growing, mark you, with our moral growth, so that, as we advance and improve, evil is found where it had not been found before, we are dissatisfied and grieved where we had not been grieved or dissatisfied. And what is this but the revelation in us of the good God, of one restless in us to purify and elevate, purposing and seeking in us to bring to pass a happier and better state of things? Here He is revealed in what we call evil, in our feeling of wrongness and intolerableness. The evil over which we grieve, and at which we gird, seems to me a clear and lovely intimation of a good God. The idea which has contributed more than anything to unbelief in Him, is the old mistaken idea that a world has been evolved full of misery and disorder, or which having been, according to the old story, originally peaceful and beautiful, has somehow fallen into misery and disorder; whereas the truth is that no world has yet been formed, that the Almighty, instead of having ever created, is as yet only creating—slowly, laboriously creating—through our evil, with our sense, our troubled, and increasing sense of wrongness and intolerableness. What we see at present is formlessness, ‘without form and void,’ in process of formation—in process of

formation through the forth-reaching and striving in us of a Divine dissatisfaction.

‘Look,’ says one in a bitter tone, speaking with bitterness of spirit, ‘look around you at all this surging sea of human suffering, at all the dreadful confusion and disorder in the human sphere! Do you call this the world of a good God?’ No, sir, my answer is; I do not at all, neither does the Almighty. For, indeed, there is no world of His here—nothing but a busy, wistful, tumultuous reaching after and striving toward one, of which, if you look, you may discern on every hand dim hints and foreshadowings—as, for instance, in the very bitterness of yonder speaker, whom the actual scene distresses and disgusts; of which you may descry hints and foreshadowings, some emergings of promise, some signs of its evolution in progress, in little meliorations of the bad effected, in little allayings and rectifyings; in gradual diffusions of error-dispersing knowledge; in the gradual betterings of social condition; in clamourings for justice slowly prevailing against ancient and buttressed injustice; in repeated, persistent attacks upon abuses, until the attacks succeed, and the baneful abuses disappear; in the scattering among us of lives resplendent with truth and grace; in scattered

heights of lofty individual attainment. Looking abroad, I now and again catch glimpses—oh, lovely glimpses!—of a blessed and beautiful world in throes of making; again and again I catch sight of it in bits and portions trying to work itself clear and come forth, though often obstructed and thrown back; in the increasing battle of medical skill with disease; of tireless philanthropy with want and woe; in every earnest effort to remedy or purge corruption; in every impatient, passionate outcry against it; in the pessimism of those whose soul is darkened beneath ‘the heavy and the weary weight’ of pain and sin’s mystery until, like Jesus on the cross, they are unable to feel the Father. In all this I recognise with admiration, and worship the yearning God. I watch the Creator at His labour. Here, in our sorrowful condemnation of the existing state of things as evil—here, He is silently fashioning His world, travailing to produce a cosmos—the Divine cosmos—that never has been, but is yet to be.

‘I heard a poet answer
Aloud and cheerfully,
“Say on, sweet sphinx! thy dirges
Are pleasant songs to me.

Deep love lieth under
 These pictures of time,
They fade in the light of
 Their meaning sublime.
Eterne alternation
 Now follows, now flies,
And under pain, pleasure,
 Under pleasure, pain lies.
Love works at the centre,
 Heart-heaving alway,
Forth throb the strong pulses
 To the borders of day."

IS IT WORTH WHILE LIVING?

‘It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.’—MATT. xxvi. 24.

THIS, according to two of the evangelists, was said by Jesus, on the evening of His arrest, concerning the Apostle who, while sitting at His feet, had arranged to betray Him—the Apostle whom, still bearing himself as a faithful and attached follower with the rest, He knew to be acting the traitor. It was a proverbial expression, I suppose, of the time, applied to any extremely miserable or worthless creature, to any most wretched condition, or guilty and mischievous life. Examples of it thus applied may be found in ancient Eastern writings, one of which occurs, for instance, in the sentence: ‘He that knoweth the law and doeth it not, it were better for him that he had not come into the world.’

But what did the phrase mean, I wonder,

on the lips of Jesus? Was it with Him a mere figure of speech, an impulsive, exaggerated utterance under the excitement of deep feeling, of intense abhorrence or pity, or distress, in view of threatened issues? Or did He mean it literally, wishing for the criminal, and because of what his crime involved and would entail, that he had never had existence, that, in the language of the patriarch Job, with regard to himself, the day could have perished wherein he was brought forth, and the night wherein it was said, There is a man-child conceived? Would it have been well to His mind if the renegade and treacherous disciple had never seen the light, had never been allowed to taste the bliss, the pain of living?

Judas Iscariot is altogether a mystery. The actual motives of his conduct are hidden from us, and cannot be determined; we shall never know with certainty what influenced him—whether the greed of money, of which, from the beginning, he seems to have been suspected, and which, growing in strength, became strong enough at length to make him covet and clutch at the trumpery bribe offered him; or sour revenge and disappointment at the strange course pursued by the Master, at the destruction of the worldly hopes and dreams with

which he had joined Him; a savage sense of having been deceived; or, as some have suggested, in charitable extenuation and from reluctance to leave him included in the category of unnatural monsters of wickedness, a mere blind desire and impatience to hasten the kingdom, of which he believed Jesus to be the Messiah, with the idea that by delivering Him to the Pharisees he would oblige Him to manifest His power and assume the throne. Which of these motives it was that actuated him none can tell. It may have been the last; let us trust it was, and that he has not deserved all the hatred and fierce detestation which, through the ages, have been heaped upon him. Anyhow, whatever may have swayed and impelled him of greater or less vileness, he was false; was playing the hypocrite, foully disloyal to his Lord under the cover of outward loyalty; under the guise of meek discipleship, taking his own way, heedless of His Lord's will, working perfidiously in opposition to Him, while maintaining an appearance of union with and surrender to Him. And to Jesus, in His utter white trueness, nothing would be more offensive and revolting, more horrible to witness, more ruinously depraving. In His eyes it would be a black blot that spoiled all, and left

what had been salt without savour, and good for nought but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men. If there was one thing more than another that was most odious to Him, which He was least able to endure or tolerate, it was falseness. No wonder if it seemed to Him that His Apostle had better not have lived at all rather than have lived to come to this—to this, after all that he had promised to be when first called and chosen, after all the tuition expended on him, and the pure and lofty atmosphere he had been breathing. Why had he ever been born to end, whatever had been acquired and enjoyed during the years, in such dire shipwreck, in such hideous degradation? Was it worth while his having been ushered into being only to be ending thus?

Yet notice, it was no harder, severer thing that He said of him than that. That was the sharpest, the worst that He found to say in contemplating his baseness. He utters no invective or scathing reproach, pronounces no sentence of condemnation, does but sigh, 'It were well that he had not been born, that he had been spared the experience of life, and the world his presence.' There was more, perhaps, of compassion than shuddering or contemp-

tuous recoil in the exclamation—compassion as for a creature woefully marred in the making, in whom gracious possibilities had been woefully warped and frustrated, who had failed to become what he was framed to become, and had therefore been framed to waste, and uselessly; compassion, perhaps implying also that the Speaker saw in him, beneath his present infatuate falseness and subjection to evil, elements of good, overlaid and slumbering elements of good that were yet to wake, and the wakening of which, sooner or later, would fill him with anguish and remorse intolerable—such anguish that any might deem it preferable almost never to have known the pleasure of consciousness, than with consciousness to have had the knowledge of its suffering. It may have been that, believing him to have hidden in the depths of him something better than he showed, something better than at the moment he was, Christ spoke as He did out of a forecasting sense of the terrible mental misery which that must cause him later on, when because of it his eyes would surely open, his heart surely grow alive to the greatness of his sin and shame, and the torment be enough to blast into nothingness whatever life had brought him before of delight or gain. For,

as there are with us seasons of rapture or exquisite joy, for the sake of which we are reconciled to all of ill and woe we may have undergone, counting it good to have lived anyhow, through any periods of trouble and darkness, only to have revelled for awhile in that joy or rapture; so there may be moments of cruel agony in some men's lot that seem to them to override and annul completely any previous happiness of theirs, and which they think they would sooner have gone without existence than have existed to bear, saying to themselves: 'What is it that we have had some charming times, some merry times by the way, when existence has involved for us this agony?'

Or again, it may have been in pitying prevision of the injuriousness to others with which the man's falseness would render him chargeable, the grief, the despair, the temporary loss of faith, and soul disordering for others that would lie at his door, with the gallows of infamy he was rearing for himself, the anathemas and curses he was preparing to rest on his name; it may have been in pitying prevision of these also that Christ was moved to exclaim in the words of the text. Over against these, what had he ever been or done, gathered

or dispensed, to make it worth while that he had breathed beneath the sun?

But now, Is there any mortal of whom it might be declared with truth that it were well if he had not been born? I have heard some affirm at times that they would just as soon not have been born, for all the good they have found in their course; that life has not been such with them as to induce aught of thankfulness for it, or to give the feeling that it would be a pity to have missed it. I have heard people avow in middle age that, knowing what they now know about it, if the choice of accepting or refusing had been granted them, they would certainly have declined the offer of living—content, nay, preferring, not to be. ‘What has been the benefit, the use of it?’ they have asked. ‘Our days have been spent for the most part in poor drudging toil—toil mainly for meat and drink; have been filled with sordid, strangling cares, with ever-recurring vexation and disappointment, with blighted hopes and baffled purposings, and sanguine dreams nursed only to be shattered. What has been the benefit?’

I am sorry to say that I have heard a few young men talk in a similar strain, with a tired, blasé air upon them, and a dreary scorn

of existence that would have startled and perplexed me immensely if I had not thought it rather affected and insincere.

But there are those by whom life is honestly felt as scarce worth living, as a gift of no value or attraction, which they could well afford to have been spared. Witness the Suicide Club lately discovered in New York, the members of which had agreed to destroy themselves for no particular reason apparently, but merely to take their lives in accordance with the rule of the club, as a teetotum spun upon the table round which they sat chanced to stop before one or another of the company. Dice are thrown to determine who shall spin the teetotum, and he before whom it happens to stop is bound to put an end to himself, by whatever method he may choose, within twelve hours. 'We are mostly poor, and have no special love of life,' was the reply of one of the members, when asked to explain his motive for joining such an organization.

No special love for life! And yet, at the worst, it has amid its throes its occasional thrills; and to any who possibly, without the slightest inclination to suicide, are yet murmuring at times beneath calamity or hardship, 'We should be quite willing not to have

been born,' I would say, Is it not good, at all events, to have had these occasional thrills? Have there not been passages in their history, delicious intervals between their heaviest glooms, to have missed which would have been loss—short mornings of laughter betwixt nights of weeping, transient feasts of intercourse in the lonely wilderness, slakings of thirst at unexpected rills, spells of sweet rest from distasteful or exhausting labour; joys in dreaming dreams that were rudely broken and came to nought, in harbouring hopes that were never realized, pleasures of aiming, though in vain, of scheming for coveted ends, or grappling with difficulties, luxuries of heavenly ease after sharp attacks of pain, sensations on balmy spring mornings, or in watching gorgeous autumn sunsets, for which alone, and in spite of all miseries, it was worth having lived?

Oh! it is something, I think, let our lot have been what it may, to have seen the sun, and the fluttering and dancing in the breeze of golden daffodils beside the lake beneath the trees; to have smelt the smell of June roses and honeysuckles; to have eaten when hungry; and pressed the pillow when weary; to have put forth our strength in striving, and rejoiced for a while in the anticipation of success; to

have loved with all our soul what we have been stricken sore and crushed by losing; to have sipped the wine of friendship, and received comfort in mourning.

For myself, life has had its charms and satisfactions, if scattered, which I would rather have suffered anything, or be doomed to suffer, anything hereafter, than not have known. It is good to have lived, I say—good to have lived, ‘though the waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.’

But, leaving aside enjoyments here and there, now and again, which may have compensated for much, where is the profit, men have asked, where the sufficiently good end answered? There are those—indeed, not a few—who seem to have lived for little enough of value, whether for themselves or others. What has been their growth in mind or heart? What have they acquired of excellence, or yielded of ministry? Have they gathered any store of wisdom, or derived any moral culture from experience? Nay, what early promise in them has been spoiled, what early sensibility deadened and destroyed! They have but fallen away miserably from what they were. The action of years has but wrung and distorted

them, has left them melancholy failures or stranded wrecks. And if they may not have been very harmful in their course, may not have wrought any positive mischief, where is the good they have ever done or contributed to promote? Would the world have lost aught, or the sum of beauty, of virtue in it, have been a whit the smaller, had they never been?

Here is one born and bred in the midst of wretchedness and depravity, and never rising above it or escaping from it; but dragging on to the end a wretched and depraved existence—a life of daily hardship and grovel, without a breathing of aspiration, filled only with lowest aims and coarsest lustings. Or here is one capable of something higher, wholly absorbed in the struggle to earn a living somehow, thinking no higher thoughts, chained down to the sordid by sordid necessities, with the soul in him repressed, and smothered under the weight of care that lies heavily and soul-benumbingly on thousands. And were it not as well that such had not been born? What is there to show of justifying reason for their birth?

Are we, however, quite in a condition to judge—we from whom the mystic meaning of the great scheme of things is hidden, who

cannot penetrate in the least what is in process, and who see so little of what takes place in men below the surface, know so little of their secrets? There are those whom you and I might be ready to 'cast as rubbish to the void,' who yet may be serving profitably, if for nothing else, as needed warnings and beacons, as flaming signals on the waste of waters—for some safe-guarding and salvation outside themselves, or as vicarious sufferers appointed to suffer awhile toward the benefit of others, to be the instruments of evoking good in others, of growing in them, by the sight of their own ugly need and misery, growths of compassion, and sympathy, and self-sacrificing devotion, that through their stripes these may be healed, through their disordering these be fashioned.

'It may be necessary,' as one has said, 'that some should be lost for a time, in order that through their loss others may be saved. The spiritual world has its wasted lives, its gruesome abortions, its mournful failures, its dismal scapegoats dying in the bleak wilderness of ignominy or defeat, which, while condemned and anathematized by spectators, may be in some sense bearing away the sins of many.' And with respect to those in whose case there appears to have been

nothing but misery or frustration, without any fruit of good or grain of culture for them, who can tell—we cannot—what necessary foundation for some after-education and growth may not have been laid in the apparently barren misery or frustration endured; that this may not be the black, noisome mud needed somehow for their eventual flowering—the mud from which is to be drawn hereafter a white lily's grace and perfume? If, indeed, the grave were the end of all, and there were no beyond, we might well ask concerning some why they were ever born. Nothing of service seems to have fallen from them, nothing of beautiful quality seems to have been developed in them; they have come to nothing under the action of the years—like buds that perish unopened, or vessels marred and broken in the hands of the potter. Life, perhaps, has scarcely brought them any due chance of becoming what they might have become. Aspirations stirring in their breasts again and again have been rendered, by cruel circumstances, helplessly infertile. There have been tokens in them, perhaps, of germinal capacity — of latent radiant gift, or noble element to which life has failed to accord the requisite eliciting airs and influences. And if death be the close,

to what purpose, we are moved to cry, was existence given them? Why should they have lived only to live and pass away thus unexpressed and unformed?

Yet that mystic power under which we come into being, and are kept dreaming, struggling, suffering, aiming and failing here, is working *with* us all surely, and working *in* us all, more than we discern. It is a Divinely ordered, a Divinely governed, world, and I cannot think, for my part, that a single human soul enters it in vain, to ugly waste. This, at least, is my faith, that the great Lord of all, who sees with 'larger, other eyes than ours,' may be finding continually sweet use and secret fruitfulness where we are able to find none.

'Partake my confidence. No creature's made so mean
But that some way it boasts, could we investigate,
Its supreme worth ; fulfils, by ordinance of fate,
Its momentary task, gets glory all its own,
Tastes triumph in the world, pre-eminent, alone.

* * * * *

As firm is my belief, quick sense perceives the same
Self-indicating flash illustrate every man
And woman of our mass, and prove, throughout the
plan,
No detail, but, in place allotted it, was prime
And perfect.'

Anyhow, let us resolutely prize life at its bleakest and painfulest ; let us resolutely feel

that it is always a grand and blessed thing to *be*,—here in the flesh, here amid these scenes ; and be sure that, in seeking to attain and minister somewhat, in seeking to be true and good and faithful to the light within, something is wrought in us and contributed by us of value enough to make it well and worth while that we were born.

MERCY.

‘The mercy of the Most High.’—Ps. xxi. 7.

OUR word *mercy* bears among us several meanings, is used to denote several different things. We apply it now, to any benefit ministered, any kindness shown that might have been withheld, and where no particular claim on us existed ; and now, to compassion for the unfortunate, the suffering, or to the succour and relief which compassion bestows, to sympathy with others’ ills and woes, and the disposition felt, the action taken to remedy or assuage them. It is our designation, again, for charitableness in judgment, for a lenient handling in thought and utterance of observed faults and failings, or for readiness to spare another unnecessary trouble and pain, to restrain ourselves rather than occasion him needless vexation, to give up something, to

yield something in order to his happiness or comfort, to forego a right that could be fairly pressed, with a view to his advantage. Often, again, we signify with it the gracious awarding of less punishment than is deserved, out of regard for the culprit himself, or in recognition of certain extenuating circumstances connected with his case, or from tender reluctance to exercise due severity; a gracious letting off of the offender from the punishment merited. And this, I suppose, is the etymological import of the word, which would seem to have been formed from 'amerce,' to impose a fine. In ancient law, you know, penalties affecting life and limb were remittable on payment of a sum of money. To 'cry mercy' was to cry ransom, to beg that money or goods might be accepted in lieu of life or limb forfeited; to 'grant mercy' was to accede to such commutation; the amercing or fining of a criminal or prisoner of war who stood under doom of death was beneficial to him, meant his release from the overhanging doom, and hence our 'mercy,' in the sense of forgiveness or remission of punishment.

But while the word is employed by us in other and various senses besides, one common idea may be said to lie unitingly at the root of

all, namely, humane considerateness — considerateness for others in their need, their misery, their frailty, or their unworthiness and ill-desert.

Now, in what we call Nature, nothing of mercy is to be found, nothing of considerateness for us. She does not sympathize with or regard in the least, for example, our varying moods and mental states—neither the grief in which we may happen to be plunged to-day, nor the gladness with which we may throb and overflow to-morrow. The shining of her sun is never dimmed at all because we are heavily care-burdened or convulsed with anguish, nor do her glooms ever melt, her gray, lowering skies ever brighten in answer to our smiles. Her serene stars look down with undisturbed serenity upon our wildest perplexity, our deepest pain, and our raptures and triumphs she witnesses perfectly unmoved, affected in her course by none of them. This cold indifference of hers vexes us at times. We are half offended in our misery or depression at her continued radiance or placid, unruffled aspect, and half angrily draw down the blind in the chamber of sorrow to shut it from our sight. Like the sorrowing Clymene in Keats' 'Hyperion,' whom he represents as saying:

‘ I stood upon a shore, a pleasant shore,
When a sweet clime was breathed from a land
Of fragrance, quietness, and trees, and flowers.
Full of calm joy it was, as I of grief ;
Too full of joy and soft delicious warmth ;
So that I felt a movement in my heart
To chide and to reproach that solitude.’

Man’s desire to find in Nature some responsiveness to his thrills and throes ; the feeling that she ought not, somehow, to be unresponsive to great moments, at all events, in his history and experience, ought not to wear a careless and unmeaning face when he is strongly moved, when that is occurring which intimately concerns him, as though it were nothing to her, has shown itself in the numerous legends of unusual natural phenomena coinciding with important crises in the human world, of signs in the heavens and the air appearing at the birth or death of some grand soul or famous hero ; a brilliant comet, for instance, marking his birth, or a shudder of storm, a falling of strange darkness over all the land at his death. Nature must surely be shaken or stirred, it is thought, in correspondence with pregnant happenings or mighty epochs in the life of humanity. But no, she is not, any more than in correspondence with our personal undergoings.

Again, in the operation of her laws and pro-

cesses there is nought of mercy. These go on heedless of whatever cruel consequences for us, never checked nor modified by any consideration for us, for cherished plans and purposes of ours that may be rudely frustrated, or precious things of ours that may be wrenched away. Her hurricanes devastate our carefully-tended gardens and fields, her volcanic eruptions carry slaughter and ruin abroad, her earthquakes entomb towns and villages, without the smallest concern. Not to save or spare the most valued and valuable life, or one of our innocent toddling children, will she turn aside or tarry for an instant in her path. And for any violation or neglect of her laws she exacts always the uttermost farthing of the penalty, never letting us off at our bitterest deprecating cry, or abating chastisement for reasonable excuses pleaded. Offend but in a single point, and she smites you with relentless fierceness, though in all other points you may have been flawlessly obedient. Your great worthiness is nothing to her, is powerless to avert or lighten the resilient blow. If you have erred with the best intentions, or through helpless ignorance, or from unwitting misapprehension, she takes not the least account of that, but empties upon you just the same the vials of her wrath. For

breaking her commandments mere blind foolishness receives the same recompense as open-eyed and wanton wilfulness. She will not grant you exemption from any pang or headache which your thoughtless conduct has incurred, nor loosen for you a bit the iron coil of evil habit which your thoughtless acts have forged to entangle and oppress you, but condemns you to be still entangled and oppressed by it, when you would fain throw it off; and to eat still the fruit of your ill-doing when you have long ago repented of it in sackcloth and ashes. She is entirely remorseless, has no forgiveness for sins. The sinner sues to her for remission or reduction of her sentence in vain. Sisyphus must continue to roll up hill the everlastingly back-rolling stone, and Ixion to swing round broken on the wheel, and Tantalus to endure his doom of raging thirst.

And yet, when we say there is no mercy in Nature we are wrong, for man himself is part and parcel of Nature, and in him it is found abundantly. In him she becomes kind, rises out of dead unfeelingness into sweet capacity of feeling, out of stern indifference into compassion and sympathy and generous consideration—seeking to heal the wounds she has inflicted, to cure or allay the griefs she has

caused, to redeem from the misery wrought by her reckless strokes. Nature in man, her last and highest unfolding, is ever devising to comfort the mourners she makes. Do not judge her apart from him whom she comprises. If you gird at and denounce her that she is so cold-blooded and pitiless, acknowledge that in him she is, at the same time, and all the while, gracious, and tender, and full of impulse, full of endeavour to succour and solace whom she must e'en scourge. Here, within the breast and shining on the forehead of Nature, the merciless, is 'the mercy of the most High.'

But, again, what is it but mercy which we are encountering and enjoying constantly in our course—in the shape of benefits received, of good things silently falling to us that we have not earned or merited, that are given without money and without price, for which we have paid nothing whatever of toil or struggle? Advantages, privileges, comforting and serviceable appliances, are ours to-day, through the days, which we have had no hand in creating for ourselves, which have come to us from the labour and achieving of others, of those around us, or those who have been before us. We live in enlargements, are the happy inheritors of liberties for which we never fought

at all, but which our fathers won for us in fighting, or laid the foundation of in the sweat of their faces. What they sowed in tears we reap with joy; while every day good flows to us, wants of ours are supplied, luxuries of ours are possessed, as the result of energies and activities beyond our own, but for which we should be left without much that we have. We are the daily recipients of many gratuitous ministries.

And who has not had to be thankful for unexpected deliverances or alleviations, when prospects were dark and threatening, or circumstances were hard, for some much better turning out of things than might have been looked for, or should have ensued from his erring action; for escapes granted him from what he could not have complained of having been made to suffer for his folly, and granted without any device or effort of his; for fortunate happenings and lucky accidents, as we term them? Have we not said to ourselves once and again that we were wonderfully favoured, or that from the upas-tree of our misdeed or blunder we ought really to have gathered bitterer fruit than we did; that undeserved kindness had somehow been shown us? Who has lived through the years without

gratitude occasionally for some good that has grown out of evil, for some blessing which calamity or mischance has precipitated, because what had seemed to him a wholly adverse occurrence has proved actually propitious in the end, or has yielded to his satisfaction incidental gain? If our vices, as Shakespeare says, often scourge us sorely, have they not sometimes conduced to serve us, teaching us lovely lessons, working in us a wiser, humbler, or more charitable mind, for which we were glad? We have found ourselves profitably disciplined, as we had not sought or thought to be, by unwelcome contact with harsh and ugly things; it has had on us a tonical effect, has left in us something of prized moral culture which we had not striven or studied at all to derive from it. We have been disciplined and cultured by it imperceptibly and quite passively, as the seed in the field germinates and springs up independently of the husbandman, and while he sleeps and rises night and day. Have there not been times with us when events impending, that we dreaded, and would fain have been spared encountering, have brought us benediction; or when we have been enabled to do above ourselves, to delighted self-surprise, more finely, more heroically, perhaps, than

before we should have deemed ourselves capable of doing ; when it was as though new faculties had been given us, as though we had been made strong with a strength beyond our own ! Oh yes, there has been plenty of mercy in our life amidst whatever of crossness and sharpness endured. In entertaining strangers we have entertained angels unawares. Good things have come to us which we had not gone to meet, or gained by seeking after and labouring for. We have known and experienced the mercy of the Most High ; and if sensible of much, it may be that much is being shown us of which we are not sensible, but may awake to perceive hereafter, in looking back along the way with clearer eyes, and from a higher ground.

But now, what is mercy really, in relation to wrong-doing ? What really is mercy to the culpable and breakers of law ? For there are mistaken and fallacious ideas about this. It is not remission of sins, in the sense of withholding punishment, is not refraining to inflict the penalty incurred and deserved ; that may be done without any mercy, and in contradiction of it ; may be cruelty, indeed, rather than kindness. It is done not unfrequently from thoughtless disregard for the culprit's interest,

from indifference to what would be best for him, out of mere weak, limp tenderness, mere soft, lazy amiability, or out of a spirit of self-indulgence, to save one's self trouble or pain, to avoid being one's self afflicted in punishing, hugging our own ease and comfort, heedless of what the welfare of the culprit demands. It is often nothing but rank selfishness that forgives the wrong-doer. Mercy to him is just sympathetic considerateness in dealing with him, sympathetic consideration of all the circumstances, of any circumstances that may possibly call for a remission of the extremity of the sentence attached to the act, of anything in the nature of the causes that led to the act, in the history, the environment, the experience, or the make of the transgressor that tends to lessen his moral guilt. It is full and exact allowance for all these in judging him, so that he receives the very recompense that is due and meet, and no other, so that while, apart from these, he may appear to deserve a severe sentence, in view of these a less severe sentence is passed. As when, with respect to the disloyal slumbering of the three disciples in Gethsemane, who should have watched beside Him, Jesus said, 'The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' There, in looking on

their unfaithful sleep, He recognised the extenuating element ; recognised the willingness of the spirit behind the weakness of the flesh, the unavoidable weakness with which the willingness had to contend, and by which it was obstructed, and recognising this, left them unrebuked, or only very mildly rebuked, whose sleep might have been deemed worthy of deeper reproach. That was mercy ; a sympathetic discerning of, and acting upon, whatever of palliation existed in connection with witnessed defect ; in other words, a sympathetic discerning of and acting upon the true state of the case.

Some of the ancient Hebrew bards and prophets would seem to have understood it thus when, as so often, they joined together, in their utterances, *mercy* and *truth*, as though these were synonyms, but different expressions of the same thing. We speak often as though in mercy there was some putting aside of *truth*, some lenient, excusable departure from, or ignoring of, truth—something done not strictly right, not strictly the thing, you know, yet which, for kindness' sake, may be allowed. Whereas they thought of mercy apparently as an exhibition of perfect fidelity to truth, as a dealing with the transgressor according to the

very truth, and the whole truth in regard to himself and his deed. Mercy, then, is not something different from justice, is not any consenting to be other than just, but is, indeed, the highest, completest justice, justice most deeply and delicately discriminating, from whose consideration nothing relating to the transgressor is omitted, that should be considered; and whose apportioning is exquisitely proportioned to his real desert and need of correction.

Hence, mercy in judgment is one of the most difficult things to exemplify, an attainment often beyond us, whatever our wish and intention; with the strongest desire and the sincerest endeavour we must often unwittingly fall short of it, failing to mete it out with perfect adaptation, with perfect equitableness when we would, in consequence of our helplessly inadequate perception, because of the secrets of men that are not to be penetrated by us. For its exemplification, in fact, a God is required; nothing less than omniscience can be always capable of it. It can be obtained invariably only from the Most High; as the Jewish psalmist appears to have felt in saying 'To Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy, for Thou renderest to every man according to his work.'

That, in a moment of inspiration, he saw to be mercy; and to whom, then, but to the Lord, could it belong? Whose knowledge but His could be equal to rendering to every man according to his work? His, who sees with 'larger, other eyes than ours to make allowance for us all,' weighing most accurately against the reprehensible act, the unfortunate organization of the actor, his handicapping, bad education, the strength of his inherited tendencies; distinguishing, as we cannot always, between 'sins that express the very nature of the man committing them, which are the outcome of his truest and most permanent self, and sins that are but transient phenomena, eclipses, as it were, of his real nature, hardly so much his own doing, as that of some alien or hostile spirit which has temporarily seized him, like the sin of Arthur Dimmasdale in Hawthorne's "Scarlet Letter."'

And allowance, look you, for guilt-*aggravating* secrets, no less than for guilt-*extenuating* secrets, for the hidden, exceeding blameworthiness of a seemingly small offence, no less than for the hidden mitigations of a seemingly heinous offence; for the mercy of the Lord is to be feared, as if it may be displayed in condemning but mildly, it may be displayed also in con-

demning with severity ; if it may spare the blow, when men in their narrow-sightedness and superficial observation would strike heavily, it may also pass direst sentence, when they would sentence lightly. The mercy of the Most High, like the god Janus of ancient Rome, has for us two diverse faces, a gentle and a stern, a consoling and an awesome one, since it renders to every man according to his work. Yet, for any of us, what could be better or wholesomer than to be thus judged ?

THOSE IN THE FRONT, AND THOSE BEHIND THE SCENES.

‘Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher’s coat unto him, and did cast himself into the sea.’—JOHN xxi. 7.

UNLIKE most ghost stories, in which, for the most part, the apparition is readily identified, in the New Testament stories of Christ’s appearances after death to His friends, the latter are represented as once and again failing to recognise Him—at least, for a time. For a time their eyes were holden : His form was strange to them. He came to His own, and His own knew Him not. And this rather commends itself to one as more natural, as more what might be expected in the case of a return from the world beyond. We could well imagine that in any such return the aspect of the visitor would be scarcely familiar ; that to have passed through the crisis of death and made acquaintance with

what lies on the other side, with those other mysterious conditions of being, would have left upon Him some transfiguring change. If it were possible for one who had gone thither from hence to re-enter our field of view, and sit and talk with us here, would he seem to us quite the same? Would not his ultra-mundane experience have somewhat disguised him for us? Foreign surely from his old self would he be—like Lazarus, in Robert Browning's imaginative portrayal of him, after those days of 'heaven opened to his soul.'

'The man is witless of the size, the sum,
The value in proportion of all things,
Or whether it be little or be much.
Discourse to him of prodigious armaments
Assembled to besiege his city now,
And of the passing of a mule with gourds—
'Tis one—or
Speak of some trifling fact—he will gaze rapt
With stupor at its very bitterness,
As if in that, indeed,
He caught prodigious import, whole results ;
And so will turn to us the bystanders
In ever the same stupor
That we, too, see not with his opened eyes.

* * * * *

He holds on to a thread of life
That runs athwart some vast distracting orb
Of glory on either side that meagre thread,
Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet—
The spiritual life around the earthly life ;

His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here.
So is the man perplex with impulses,
Sudden to start off cross-wise, not straight on,
Proclaiming what is right and wrong across,
And not along, this black thread through the blaze—
“It should be” baulked by “here it cannot be.”

But you know how, from absence, from years of various adventure, from sojourn among other scenes and surroundings, from troubles battled with or sorrows borne, our friends come back to us greatly altered, so greatly altered that we look on them at first with unrecalling eyes, and only gradually recall them; but gradually, as we look, they are disclosed; we find them again as they converse with us, in the tones of their voice, in some peculiarity of gesture or manner, in the emergence from under the new face of some remembered expression. And if ever they rejoined us from the absence of death, from sojourn in the far-off land behind the veil, would they not probably be stranger still,—strange as the resurrection Jesus is said to have been to His disciples, when they saw and heard Him, for awhile, without the least suspicion that it was He, their old Master, and only slowly grew aware of Him in the course of communion, only knew Him at length, for instance, after some time in His company, in His act, His

familiar act, of blessing and breaking the bread.

In the story which we have here of His apparition to some of them by the Galilean lake, a story added to the records of the fourth Gospel by some later hand, they are represented as not at once discerning who He was, until it suddenly flashed upon one of their number. It was early dawn on the lake, after a night of fruitless labour in their fishing-boats, when, as they neared the shore, weary and dispirited, a man was descried standing there, who hailed them with inquiry concerning their provisions, and, in reply to the answer that they had caught nothing, advised them to make another trial with their nets, which, made on His advice, proved wondrously successful. But who the early loiterer was, accosting and counselling them from the beach, they never dreamt till, as the laden nets were being hauled in, John whispered to Simon Peter, 'It is the Lord.' He at last and alone detected Him, like a mother finding in the bronzed and bearded stranger on the threshold her son, the son unrevealed to the eyes of other members of the family.

It is sad to come home and not be known ; to present ourselves in the familiar place among

the friends of bygone days, and encounter no glance of recognition. You remember, do you not, the pathetic description in the *Odyssey* of the great Ulysses' home-coming from long years of travel, when, save his old nurse after awhile, and his dog immediately, none recognised him. Neither servants nor son nor wife had any greeting for him as Ulysses; only the old nurse, by some sign, found him out eventually, and

'Argus, the dog, his ancient master knew,
He, not unconscious of the voice and tread,
Lifts to the sound his ear, and rears his head.
He knew his lord : he knew, and strove to meet,
In vain he strove to crawl and kiss his feet ;
Yet—all he could—his tail, his ears, his eyes,
Salute his master, and confess his joys.

* * * * *

The dog whom fate had granted to behold
His lord, when twenty tedious years had rolled,
Looks in his face, and having seen him, dies.'

Jesus, coming back, we are told—so we are told—from the realm of shades, stood undiscovered by those to whom He showed Himself, but at length one of them, receiving an impression of Him, murmured his conviction convincingly to another, who in his joy sprang overboard to wade to Him through the water. And the story is interesting for the glimpse afforded of these two men, in their difference,

for what it brings out of contrast between them in nature and quality. The one more intuitively perceptive, the other more forward in action; the one quicker to see, the other swifter to do. Here was a common moment, a common situation in their lives, which served to express and display their diverseness, under which they are severally indicated, as men are again and again in some common crisis or conjuncture; it reveals all at once and vividly their distinctive features, illustrates strikingly their dividing characteristics. Until then, perhaps, they had seemed pretty much alike, had been keeping step together, and behaving in accord, but then straightway they fall asunder and are sharply distinguished.

And, as with John and Peter, there are those who are more brooding seers than energetic workers, and those who are workers rather than seers; those to whom it is given to discern deeply or delicately, and those to whom it is given to dare bravely, or to excel in affairs; those in whom dwells richly the spirit of revelation, and those filled with the spirit of enterprise; men of the quiet inner eye, and men of the busy hand. While, as with John and Peter, those supplement each other's defects, each abounding where the other lacks,

and with his abundance supplying the lack; the dream of the dreamer who is not particularly apt at carrying out, carried out, perhaps, by him who is unequal to dreaming, and contributing, perchance, to start and determine his performance. Bezaleel the craftsman, in the wilderness, would never have fashioned what he did without Moses the seer; and without Bezaleel the craftsman the tabernacle of Moses which Jehovah showed him on the Mount would never have been built. The poet, to whose exquisite gift we are wholly strangers, can only sing, maybe, and no more, while we who listen only, and cannot sing at all, fight the good fight in which we are animated and aided by his song. And one mighty in deed is often wanting in the fine sensibility of another beside him, whose finer sensibility may tend to cripple or enfeeble him for doing.

Simon Peter stands out most conspicuously and shows greatest here. He it is who plunges into the sea after Jesus, swept by impatience to be with Him; yet, until John whispered in his ear, he did not know Him; and John, who knew Him, John, the discerning, remains in the boat, makes no eager spring to reach Him. Peter, who knew only by hearsay, and not by direct vision, rushes to fling

himself at the Master's feet ; but he whose own heart had descried the Lord stays where he is, as though under restraint ; and it was just because of his direct vision, perhaps, that he did not move and could not move ; just because he had not been told, had not learnt from another, but had seen, and, having seen, felt too deeply to stir.

And there are visions, you know, that more or less paralyze for action, they oppress and bewilder us, we are disabled by them, but for them we might have *done* more. One steps briskly forward because he sees very little, sees not widely or profoundly ; another hangs back, refrains, or hesitates, because he sees greatly. One sees all the importance and magnitude of the moment, sees the conjuncture in all its bearings and pregnancies, or all that may be said on the other side of the question, and must needs tremble with awe, or linger undecided, cannot throw himself into the movement with all the ardour and enthusiasm of another whose view is less ample or extended. Blindness may produce a courage and audacity very fine to look at, which illumination precludes. While there is an inertness which means deficient feeling, dulness of impression, there is an inertness also which signifies intensity of

feeling, depth of impression. It makes, moreover, all the difference sometimes in your expression, whether you have learnt a thing from hearing it declared, or from your own inner sensibility ; whether it is flashed straight upon your soul, or has been conveyed to you from the lips of another ; whether, in a word, you have got it by intuition or by information.

But now that Simon Peter went forth to do notably was due to what he had received in secret from John. John was the secret inspiration of it, without whom he would not have conducted himself as he did, would not have performed his famous act—John, who was not at all prominent in the matter, who stood by reticent and inconspicuous. It is an image of what is constantly owing by some, who are seen labouring greatly or accomplishing much, to some behind the scenes who are not known or heard of, but who, remaining obscure and hidden, are silent quickeners or nourishers of those whose work is beheld and applauded. How often, for example, is there a wife or sister within doors who contributes not a little to what the man out of doors is able to be and do, without whom he would scarcely have endured or persisted as he has ; whose sweet effect is in him, to some sustaining and

strengthening; whose loving thought or sympathy, whose instinctively wise touch or dealing, has helped greatly to keep him up to the mark, encouraging him when otherwise he would have been discouraged, recovering him from despondency, spurring him on when he was ready to flag; whose personal exhaling has been to him many a time as the dew of evening, reviving and refreshing him for the morrow; in quiet talk with whom he has many a time drunk of the brook by the way and lifted up his head, but for whom he might again and again have done less admirably, have run down and failed!

Is there not often such a wife or sister within doors who has contributed, without observation, to the succour and the shaping of the brave man out of doors? And no one knows, perhaps, but himself, nor he himself altogether maybe—no one knows or suspects what he owes to her, the part she has really played behind the scenes in promoting his achievements.

Or here is a great work wrought before the eyes of men and commanding wide homage and praise, the first idea of which was kindled, the first impulse to which given, by some book read, to which none have dreamed of attribut-

ing it, which has no credit for it ; or by some word dropped from lips, by some influence breathed from a life not in the least suspected of having conduced to it. Here is a great and brilliant course run and crowned with well-deserved honour, that took its rise and received its bent from the quickening, moulding action upon the runner in his early years of some humble, nameless teacher of whom the world has never heard, and whose hand in determining the course is never guessed ; like a mighty river rolling through the land, the source of which lies in some unvisited, untraced rill among remote hills. There are those—silent, secluded thinkers or dreamers who never come before the multitude, by whom the multitude are never consciously moved or ministered to, but from whom a few derive in private, to give to the multitude, and are made voices to arrest and instruct in the streets through their whisperings ; and there are those whose work is not so much to do anything themselves as to be suggestive for doing, starting fruitful thoughts, stirring fruitful motions, or states of mind in one and another whom they touch by the way, serving less with their deeds, which are few enough, God knows, than with their subtle, personal

aroma and atmosphere ; like the poets whom Shelley described as ‘trumpets which ring to battle, and feel not what they inspire, as influences which move not, but are moving.’ Men like Edward Fitzgerald, or Frederic Amiel, who, gifted with insight and vision above their fellows, yet for some reason or other, through some weakness or defect in them, through utter lack of ambition, or too great nervous sensibility, or incapacity of expression, live and die in obscurity, never coming to the front, never producing an impression by any performance of theirs, as their intimate friends think they ought ; yet are leaving ever some stimulating, elevating effect of themselves, upon such as are admitted to intercourse with them ; with some inspiring effluence from them at their own fireside are feeding the spirit of others, are enlarging or energizing others to do in the world’s broad field. They seem to be failures, perhaps, considering their felt capabilities and powers. ‘What have they done?’ men ask. ‘Where is there work of theirs?’ yet, in contact and communion with them, great doers have been kindled and strengthened, virtue has gone forth from them in noiseless currents, while they sat with folded hands.

There are those, again, who, in comparison

with others, may have been sadly frail and faulty, whose conduct may often have been poor and the reverse of praiseworthy, who, nevertheless, with their visions have been widely helpful and edifying, and it is through their very visions, possibly, that they have been somewhat disordered and wrung and lamed for fine walking. Their genius has been too much for them, has made them eccentric or erratic, has afflicted them with strange tempers and morbid states. They have seen divinely for our enriching, to their own enfeebling and disarray, gathering truth for us; 'with bended back,' treading out for us 'the blood of grapes, with garments dyed and ceaseless feet, that follow no fair track.'

'O ye in all the world who love true song,
Be gentle to the singers who uplift
In innocent delight a cradle gift—
That often tends to work *them* fatal wrong.
Judge them not wholly as the tuneless throng,
But if within their instrument a rift
Be found to mar not music, give it shrift—
Song justifies itself, if sweet and strong.'

There are seers of whom we may complain, concerning whom we may have to lament, that they are not equal to their beautiful visions. Like Moses, to whom was shown on his height above the encamped Israelites the

goodly land, with its fruitful hills and flowery meads, the land which he himself might not enter with the multitude whom he had been conducting thither; like him, they stumble and err and fall in the wilderness. Well, at least, they have told their vision abroad, and it has been the means of impelling many—they have saved others while unable to save themselves. If, on the Galilean lake, the disciple who saw, when the eyes of the rest were blind, stood still and hastened not to the feet of the Master beheld, it was the whisper of what he saw that sent his comrade plunging forward in spite of wave and water. One dreams nobly, and does not much, marred, perhaps, for doing by his very gift of dream; but by it another and another are taught and moved to do, and, falling short of the blessing, he has yet lived to bless.

THE END.

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